

COBURN'S WAR ON PORK ■ EMPIRE IS A BAD TRADE ■ TAKI GOES ROYAL

FEBRUARY 2011

# The American Conservative

## Ike's Last Stand

Fifty Years of the  
Military-Industrial  
Complex



A symposium featuring

Patrick J. Deneen ♦ Michael C. Desch

Bill Kauffman ♦ Lew Rockwell

Robert Schlesinger

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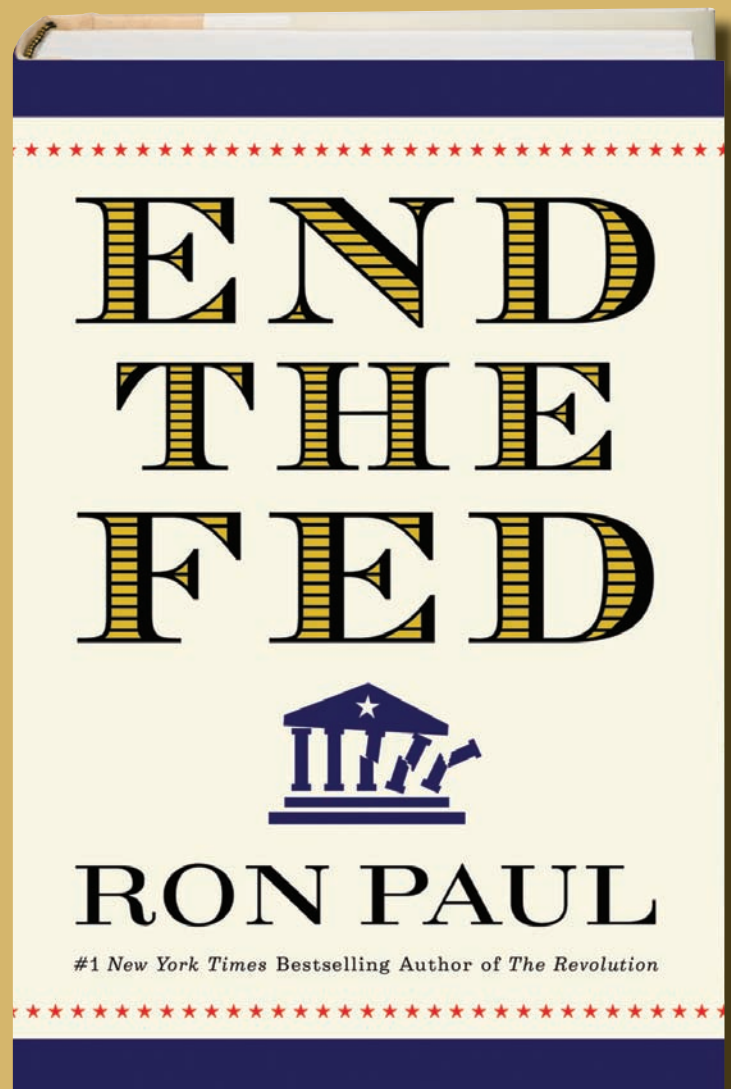


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## MURDER FIT TO PRINT

This winter the *Washington Post* welcomed another neoconservative to its pages. Already the mainstream media home to former Bush staffers Michael Gerson and Marc Thiessen, as well as the occasional Bill Kristol column, the *Post* now boasts a blog by Jennifer Rubin, late of *Commentary*.

She has wasted no time pushing the war party's line. In a Dec. 12 item, she celebrated the murder of Iranian physicists. "Every nuclear scientist who has a 'car accident,'" she wrote, should be thought of "as the ultimate targeted sanction." She echoed the sentiments of *The Atlantic's* Jeffrey Goldberg, who two days before got hearty laughs from a crowd at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies when he lauded Israeli "active measures" to "deny Iran the knowledge of its scientists." ("That was a lovely euphemism," he congratulated himself.)

The killings Rubin and Goldberg were chirping about took place in Tehran last November. Attackers on motorcycles attached bombs to two cars carrying Iranian nuclear scientists and their wives. One scientist died; the other and both women were badly wounded.

Asked about the attacks, the U.S. State Department said, in a mushy statement, that the United States opposes terrorism under all circumstances. However much we may dislike Iran's nuclear program, hunting down civilian scientists and attempting to murder them and their families is an act of terrorism.

The widespread assumption is that this was an Israeli operation, not an American one. But it does not help our reputation in the world when journalists with prominent perches cannot contain their joy at seeing inconvenient foreigners murdered. We wonder: would the *Post* or the *Atlantic* be so happy to provide a platform for gloating over the murder of, say, Alexander Litvinenko?



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[POLITICS]

## HIGH ON REGULATION

Republicans thought Christmas had come early when federal judge Henry Hudson struck down Obamacare's individual health-insurance mandate, ruling that it did not meet the constitutional test for regulating interstate commerce. But conservatives shouldn't be too quick to let corks fly. Hudson's decision is almost certain to be reviewed by the Supreme Court, and if recent precedent is any guide, the justices cannot be relied on to interpret the commerce clause in favor of individual liberty.

In 2005, California residents challenged federal drug prohibitions that were in conflict with the Golden State's medicinal marijuana laws. This led to the Supreme Court's *Raich* decision, a 6-3 ruling that employed a latitudinarian interpretation of the commerce clause, with even self-described originalist Antonin Scalia concurring that local cultivation and use of marijuana "undercuts" federal powers to regulate the interstate market. Such bad reasoning supplies a rationale for Obamacare's mandates as well since citizens who refuse to purchase insurance in a tightly regulated market "undercut" federal price controls.

Today's court contains a few new faces. But among the recent arrivals, Justices Sotomayor and Kagan are likely to agree with left-wing law professor Edwin Chemerinsky, who wrote that if "Congress can criminally punish cultivation and possession of small amounts of marijuana for personal use ... surely it

can regulate a trillion dollar industry including by requiring individuals to have health insurance." Chemerinsky already has a concurring opinion upholding the insurance mandate ready to go.

Even if conservatives win at the high court and effectively cripple Obamacare, they should be wary. Someday Democrats will again grasp the levers of power. The progressive dream of universal healthcare won't die at the Supreme Court, and the next time around, advocates of socialized medicine may insist on single-payer and public ownership from the start.

To win the argument against government-run healthcare in the long run, conservatives must consistently articulate the principles of limited government. By abandoning strict federalism and embracing central power when it serves their purposes—in regulating intoxicating substances, for example—too many on the Right have only undercut themselves.

[MIDEAST]

## ONE-STATE PROBLEM

The Obama administration has all but acknowledged that its efforts to advance Mideast peace have failed. "This is not a change in strategy; there may well be a change in tactics," State Department spokesman PJ Crowley said in December, as news broke that the administration would drop its demands for an Israeli moratorium on building settlements in Palestinian territories.

Since Obama took office, much of the world had put its faith in a peace process

directed by the United States, on the theory that America, as Israel's principal benefactor, could induce Tel Aviv to withdraw from territory it seized in 1967 and allow the Palestinians to build an independent state on 22 percent of the land of the Palestine Mandate. Such a solution—probably the most practical resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—would have brought regional recognition to Israel and an end to Palestinians' 62 years of dispossession.

Yet Israelis have elected one government after another sworn to oppose Palestinian statehood. And President Obama—who last year in Cairo spoke with eloquence and moral urgency about ending Palestinian statelessness—has made no headway. In a last humiliating gesture, he offered Tel Aviv a massive bribe—billions of dollars of additional aid, advanced attack fighters, promises to protect Israel from critical UN resolutions—if Israel would only stop constructing illegal settlements for 90 days.

He was rebuffed. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu calculated that Obama was too weak to press him, and both American political parties are too intertwined with the Israel lobby for Obama to pursue the matter.

But what has Israel gained? It has embarked on an orgy of illegal building, while driving Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley. The settlements, of course, make a two-state solution increasingly difficult—that is their purpose. It is hard to imagine an Israeli government would or could withdraw from them when a growing percentage of its army and population are settlers themselves.

The resulting “fact on the ground” is one state in which Jews have full citizenship, while Palestinian Arabs are denied civil rights. Already the West Bank has acquired the unmistakable features of an apartheid system. It seems inevitable that lacking the opportunity to build their

own state, Palestinians will soon begin to demand not a state but the right to vote. Israel can deny them and forfeit forever its claim to be a democracy, or it can submit and cease to be a Jewish state. This is obviously a more dangerous course than that offered by a two-state solution. But it seems to be what Israelis want, and the Obama administration is powerless to dissuade them.

[CONGRESS]

### CHAIRMAN PAUL

Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke's worst nightmare has come true. Following the Republican takeover of Congress, Rep. Ron Paul has been tapped to chair the Domestic Monetary Policy Subcommittee that oversees the Federal Reserve. That's right, the man who wrote *End the Fed* is going to lead the House committee tasked with keeping tabs on the central bank.

In a statement released through his Campaign for Liberty organization, Paul assured supporters that “Fed transparency will be the cornerstone of my efforts as subcommittee chairman.” But he also had words to soothe his critics. In an interview with *Fortune*, he struck a cautious note: “Although I wrote the book *End the Fed*, I don't say that you should end the Fed in one day.”

The Texas Republican will continue to push his “Audit the Fed” legislation—which has 320 co-sponsors and is partly responsible for the Fed releasing documents that detail how it aided foreign banks and companies during the 2008 crisis. But Paul also plans to be an educator in his new role, holding committee hearings on monetary and macro-economic theory that will introduce more Americans to Austrian Business Cycle theory. Roger Garrison or Robert Murphy lecturing Congress on the perils of fiat money might be the most edifying footage to air on C-SPAN since the channel launched on March 19, 1979. ■

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# Cogs of War

On Jan. 17, 1961, President Eisenhower addressed the nation.  
With these words of warning, he said farewell.

**By Dwight D. Eisenhower**

GOOD EVENING, my fellow Americans.

First, I should like to express my gratitude to the radio and television networks for the opportunities they have given me over the years to bring reports and messages to our nation. My special thanks go to them for the opportunity of addressing you this evening.

Three days from now, after half a century in the service of our country, I shall lay down the responsibilities of office as, in traditional and solemn ceremony, the authority of the presidency is vested in my successor. This evening, I come to you with a message of leave-taking and farewell and to share a few final thoughts with you, my countrymen.

Like every other citizen, I wish the new president, and all who will labor with him, Godspeed. I pray that the coming years will be blessed with peace and prosperity for all.

Our people expect their president and the Congress to find essential agreement on issues of great moment, the wise resolution of which will better shape the future of the nation. My own relations with the Congress, which began on a remote and tenuous basis when, long ago, a member of the Senate appointed me to West Point, have since ranged to the intimate during the war and immediate postwar period and finally to the mutually interdependent during these past eight years. In this final relationship, the Congress and the administration have, on most vital issues, co-operated well, to serve the national good, rather than mere partisanship, and so have assured that the business of the nation should go forward. So, my official relationship with the Congress ends in a feeling—on my part—of gratitude that we have been able to do so much together.

We now stand ten years past the midpoint of a century that has witnessed four major wars among great nations. Three of these involved our own country. Despite these holocausts, America is today the strongest, the most influential, and most productive nation in the world. Understandably proud of this pre-eminence, we yet realize that America's leadership and prestige depend, not merely upon our unmatched material progress, riches, and military strength, but on how we use our power in the interests of world peace and human betterment.

Throughout America's adventure in free government, our basic purposes have been to keep the peace, to foster progress in human achievement, and to enhance liberty, dignity, and integrity among peoples and among nations. To strive for less would be unworthy of a free and religious people. Any failure traceable to

arrogance, or our lack of comprehension or readiness to sacrifice, would inflict upon us grievous hurt, both at home and abroad.

Progress toward these noble goals is persistently threatened by the conflict now engulfing the world. It commands our whole attention, absorbs our very beings. We face a hostile ideology global in scope, atheistic in character, ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method. Unhappily, the danger it poses promises to be of indefinite duration. To meet it successfully, there is called for, not so much the emotional and transitory sacrifices of crisis, but rather those which enable us to carry forward steadily, surely, and without complaint the burdens of a prolonged and complex struggle—with liberty the stake. Only thus shall we remain, despite every provocation, on our charted course toward permanent peace and human betterment.

Crises there will continue to be. In meeting them, whether foreign or domestic, great or small, there is a recurring temptation to feel that some spectacular and costly action could become the miraculous solution to all current difficulties. A huge increase in newer elements of our defenses; development of unrealistic programs to cure every ill in agriculture; a dramatic expansion in basic and applied research—these and many other possibilities, each possibly promising in itself, may be suggested as the only way to the road we wish to travel.

But each proposal must be weighed in the light of a broader consideration: the need to maintain balance in and among national programs, balance between the private and the public economy, balance between the cost and hoped for advantages, balance between the clearly necessary and the comfortably desirable, balance between our essential requirements as a nation and the duties imposed by the nation upon the individual, balance between actions of the moment and the national welfare of the future. Good judgment seeks balance and progress. Lack of it eventually finds imbalance and frustration. The record of many decades stands as proof that our people and their government have, in the main, understood these truths and have responded to them well, in the face of threat and stress.

But threats, new in kind or degree, constantly arise. Of these, I mention two only.

A vital element in keeping the peace is our military establishment. Our arms must be mighty, ready for instant action, so that no potential aggressor may be tempted to risk his own destruction. Our military organization today bears little relation to that known of any of my predecessors in peacetime, or, indeed, by the



fighting men of World War II or Korea.

Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well. But we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense. We have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security alone more than the net income of all United States corporations.

Now this conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every statehouse, every office of the federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources, and livelihood are all involved. So is the very structure of our society.

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.

Akin to and largely responsible for the sweeping changes in our industrial-military posture has been the technological revolution during recent decades. In this revolution, research has become central; it also becomes more formalized, complex, and costly. A steadily increasing share is conducted for, by, or at the direction of the federal government.

Today, the solitary inventor, tinkering in his shop, has been overshadowed by task forces of scientists in laboratories and testing fields. In the same fashion, the free university, historically the fountainhead of free ideas and scientific discovery, has experienced a revolution in the conduct of research. Partly because of the huge costs involved, a government contract becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity. For every old blackboard there are now hundreds of new electronic computers. The prospect of domination of the nation's scholars by federal employment, project allocations, and the power of money is ever present—and is gravely to be regarded.

Yet in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite.

It is the task of statesmanship to mold, to balance, and to integrate these and other forces, new and old, within the principles of our democratic system—ever aiming toward the supreme goals of our free society.

Another factor in maintaining balance involves the element of

time. As we peer into society's future, we—you and I, and our government—must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering for our own ease and convenience the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage. We want democracy to survive for all generations to come, not to become the insolvent phantom of tomorrow.

During the long lane of the history yet to be written, America knows that this world of ours, ever growing smaller, must avoid becoming a community of dreadful fear and hate, and be instead a proud confederation of mutual trust and respect. Such a confederation must be one of equals. The weakest must come to the conference table with the same confidence as do we, protected as we are by our moral, economic, and military strength. That table, though scarred by many past frustrations, cannot be abandoned for the certain agony of the battlefield.

Disarmament, with mutual honor and confidence, is a continuing imperative. Together we must learn how to compose differences, not with arms, but with intellect and decent purpose. Because this need is so sharp and apparent, I confess that I lay down my official responsibilities in this field with a definite sense of disappointment. As one who has witnessed the horror and the lingering sadness of war, as one who knows that another war could utterly destroy this civilization which has been so slowly and painfully built over thousands of years, I wish I could say tonight that a lasting peace is in sight.

Happily, I can say that war has been avoided. Steady progress toward our ultimate goal has been made. But so much remains to be done. As a private citizen, I shall never cease to do what little I can to help the world advance along that road.

So, in this, my last good night to you as your president, I thank you for the many opportunities you have given me for public service in war and in peace. I trust in that service you find some things worthy. As for the rest of it, I know you will find ways to improve performance in the future.

You and I, my fellow citizens, need to be strong in our faith that all nations, under God, will reach the goal of peace with justice. May we be ever unswerving in devotion to principle, confident but humble with power, diligent in pursuit of the nation's great goals.

To all the peoples of the world, I once more give expression to America's prayerful and continuing aspiration: we pray that peoples of all faiths, all races, all nations, may have their great human needs satisfied; that those now denied opportunity shall come to enjoy it to the full; that all who yearn for freedom may experience its spiritual blessings; that those who have freedom will understand, also, its heavy responsibilities; that all who are insensitive to the needs of others will learn charity; that the scourges of poverty, disease, and ignorance will be made to disappear from the earth; and that, in the goodness of time, all peoples will come to live together in a peace guaranteed by the binding force of mutual respect and love.

Now, on Friday noon, I am to become a private citizen. I am proud to do so. I look forward to it.

Thank you, and good night. ■

# Drafting History

How—and why—the  
Farewell Address was written.

**By Robert Schlesinger**

A FAREWELL MESSAGE was on Dwight Eisenhower's mind well before the end of his term. Chatting with chief speechwriter Malcolm Moos in the Oval Office in May 1959, the president mentioned as an aside that there was one speech he particularly wanted to deliver. "I want to have something to say when I leave here," Ike said. "I'm not interested in capturing headlines, but I want to have a message and I want you to be thinking about it well in advance."

The president hoped Congress would extend an invitation for the speech, which should run 10 minutes. "We should be dropping ideas into a bin, to get ready for this," Moos wrote later that day in a memo for the record.

Moos started rooting around that bin in earnest in the fall of 1960. He had been struck by the sheer number of companies connected to the burgeoning defense industry and by the volume of mid-career officers who were leaving the military for contractor jobs. On Oct. 31, he had a brainstorming session for the 1961 State of the Union address with his two assistants, a former student of his named Stephen Hess and a naval officer named Ralph Williams. "Conversation with Dr. Moos this morning produced following preliminary guidelines," Williams wrote in a memo for file. "1. The problem of militarism—for the first time in its history, the United States has a permanent war-based industry. & This creates a danger that what the Communists have always said about us may become true. We must be careful to insure that the 'merchants of death do not come to dictate national policy'."

The danger of growing militarism was one Eisenhower had been considering since the start of his White House tenure. "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed," he said in April 1953. "This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children." The following month he warned that the search for "maximum security" would "compel us to imitate the methods of the dictator."

At the end of his term, as Eisenhower and his team sought words to give final voice to these fears, the critical phrase went through different variations, starting with the "war-based industry" from the Oct. 31 brainstorming session. By early December, Moos gave Ike a draft warning against a "military-industrial-scientific complex," but the president's science adviser counseled him to drop "scientific." A later iteration identified a "military-industrial-congressional complex," but the president, still envisioning an address to Congress, decided that haranguing his

hosts would be inappropriate (a positively quaint view half a century later).

It's interesting to contemplate whether certain phrases would live in memory in their earlier iterations. Would we remember Franklin Roosevelt describing Dec. 7, 1941 as "a date which will live in world history"? Would Ronald Reagan's 1987 Brandenburg Gate speech have such staying power if he had mixed German—*Herr Gorbachev, machen Sie diesses Tor auf!*—into the key phrase, as was the case in some drafts?

Eisenhower cut through draft after draft of the speech, writing or rewriting whole sections by hand. When an early version said that "we must jealously guard against the unwarranted acquisition of unwarranted influence by the military-industrial complex," for example, Ike scratched out "jealously."

He addressed the nation—from the White House, the notion of a congressional speech having faded—on Jan. 17 at 8:30 pm. Twenty months earlier he had told Moos that he wasn't looking for headlines, and in that he was successful. For the most part the speech was unremarked upon. "Red Peril to Linger, Eisenhower Warns U.S. in Valedictory," the *Washington Post* reported the next day. Instead the nation was focused on the main event three days hence when the rhetorical torch would be passed to a new generation.

But snap judgments of presidential speeches are often incorrect in the 20-20 sight of history. Jimmy Carter's 1979 "malaise" speech—in which he never uttered the word "malaise"—was deemed a success as his poll numbers shot up 11 points overnight. So too was George W. Bush's 2003 "mission accomplished" speech aboard the USS *Abraham Lincoln*. Bill Clinton's State of the Union addresses were frequently derided by the political cognoscenti as too long, even as they were embraced by voters.

But Ike's final message didn't go entirely unnoticed. The columnist Walter Lippmann was one of the few to grasp its significance immediately, noting that it would "be remembered and quoted in the days to come." In March, Eisenhower aide Bryce Harlow wrote his former boss. "There is an interesting development, Mr. President, involving your 'Farewell Address,'" he said. "At least two vigorous young Republicans in the House (Bob Michel of Illinois and Brad Morse of Massachusetts) have interested themselves in your warning to America against excessive power being accumulated by the military-industrial complex and are girding their loins to raise a rumpus through the Congressional investigations route. & The point is, this part of the Address turns out to be curiously yeasty."

Yeasty indeed—especially as the Cold War stretched on for three more decades and the national sense of purpose which would be captured by JFK's sounding trumpet gave way to the cynicism and disillusionment of the late '60s and '70s and later to the unceasing conflict of the early 21st century. ■

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*Robert Schlesinger, the opinion editor at U.S. News & World Report, is author of White House Ghosts: Presidents and Their Speechwriters.*



# The Liberal Complex

Idealism, not economics,  
drives American militarism.

By Michael C. Desch

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER famously warned his fellow Americans about the pernicious influence of what he termed “the military-industrial complex.” This was, to be sure, an important speech for many reasons, not the least of which were its prescience about the challenges that U.S. preeminence would pose for our domestic liberties and the prudent counsel of restraint he proffered to protect them. But, ironically, its most famous line was wide of the mark in identifying the roots of America’s subsequent global overreach.

Eisenhower cautioned that the country needed to be careful in how it used its growing might. Recognizing the dark side of such unrivaled power, the retiring president warned against America’s “recurring temptation to feel that some spectacular and costly action could become the miraculous solution to all current difficulties.” He pointed to the need to strike a balance—to become a military superpower while not undermining our free-market economy and the liberty of our citizens.

The danger, in the old soldier’s view, was that we would give in to “the impulse to live only for today, plundering, for our own ease and convenience, the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage. We want democracy to survive for all generations to come, not to become the insolvent phantom of tomorrow.”

But the speech’s central contention—that the root of the imbalance between our capabilities and interests on the one hand, and our aspirations on the other, lay in an unholy alliance between militarism and capitalism—strikes me from the perspective of half a century later as misguided, and not only because its most oft-quoted phrase has become a staple of the anti-American Left. It was, after all, not generals and plutocrats who impelled us upon that imperial trajectory that Ike so presciently warned against. To understand what drove us to become a quasi-imperial power, we have to look to the role of our liberal political culture.

January 20, 2011 is the 50th anniversary of John F. Kennedy’s first and only inaugural speech, which contained many memorable phrases that would crystallize the bipartisan consensus in favor of an overly ambitious American foreign policy. In it, the new president promised to “pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty.” He enthusias-

tically welcomed “the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger.” These stirring sentiments would seduce Americans across the political spectrum, from human-rights liberals to neoconservatives, and lead them to coalesce behind a series of foreign-policy debacles from Vietnam to Iraq.

The problem with American liberalism, as the Harvard government professor Louis Hartz observed, is that it has a tendency toward excess in opposite directions: on the one hand, liberalism underestimates the difficulty of transforming the world in its own image because liberalism assumes that it is the natural culmination and aspiration of humanity—that it is, as Francis Fukuyama would later put it, “the end of history.” On the other hand, liberalism contains a deep fear of the non-liberal—whether a Communist/nationalist rebellion in Southeast Asia in the 1960s or an Islamicist rival today—and fosters the sense that America could never survive in the face of such opposition. In a classic manifestation of the hubris-nemesis complex, these two very different faces of American liberalism combine Janus-like to produce a self-righteous yet trembling colossus stumbling around the world.

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“The Farewell Address’s misguided warning about a mounting military-industrial complex gave aid and comfort to subsequent generations of leftist critics of American foreign policy and ignored the disconcerting truth that the roots of our subsequent problems actually lie right in the vital center of American politics.”

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That liberalism—specifically a desire to spread democracy and protect human rights—was the fount of America’s most recent exercise in overreach, the Bush administration’s Iraq War, is controversial. But the argument that the military-industrial complex was behind it is even harder to sustain. It was, after all, the American oil industry that was most opposed to sanctions against Iraq in the 1990s, and the oil patch was hardly clamoring for war after 9/11.

Nor was the U.S. military itching for a fight with Saddam in the winter of 2003. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric Shinseki’s doubts about Iraq being a “cakewalk” in which a handful of American troops could waltz in, oust Saddam, and leave the Iraqis to set up a Jeffersonian democracy were widely shared among senior military officers.

It was civilians in the second Bush administration, including the president himself, who raised these hopes, not only pub-

licly—where they buttressed other, less altruistic arguments for war such as Iraq’s purported support for terrorism and pursuit of weapons of mass destruction—but also in the most secret counsels of the White House and Pentagon, as Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz confessed to a reporter for *Vanity Fair*.

Bush himself outlined how he saw liberalism and America’s national interest being simultaneously served by the Iraq War:

A free, democratic, peaceful Iraq will not threaten America or our friends with illegal weapons. A free Iraq will not be a training ground for terrorists, or a funnel of money to terrorists, or provide weapons to terrorists who would be willing to use them to strike our country or allies. A free Iraq will not destabilize the Middle East. A free Iraq can set a hopeful example to the entire region and lead other nations to choose freedom. And as the pursuits of freedom replace hatred and resentment and terror in the Middle East, the American people will be more secure.

This rationale served not only to win many converts to the Iraq War among the American public—over 70 percent of whom supported it in March 2003—but its democratic and humanitarian elements also garnered support from the so-called liberal hawks on the Left who might not otherwise have hopped on the war’s bandwagon.

But the most compelling piece of evidence that liberalism plays a central role in sustaining a broad coalition for an expansive foreign policy is the fact that after campaigning on a platform of international restraint, President Barack Obama has subsequently embraced and expanded a longer-term commitment to nation-building in Afghanistan and is in many respects taking an even more aggressive stance toward waging the war against terrorism than his immediate predecessor did.

So on the 50th anniversary of Eisenhower’s Farewell Address, we should re-read the speech and celebrate it as a seminal conservative warning against foreign-policy mission-creep and as the Right’s most eloquent brief on behalf of a posture of strategic restraint.

But we must also acknowledge that its misguided warning about a mounting military-industrial complex gave aid and comfort to subsequent generations of leftist critics of American foreign policy and ignored the disconcerting truth that the roots of our subsequent problems actually lie right in the vital center of American politics, with our broadly liberal political tradition. That’s why we need to read it in conjunction with President Kennedy’s inaugural address three days later to grasp the origins of our current predicament. ■

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# Science of Tyranny

Eisenhower identified more than one threat to the Republic.

**By Patrick J. Deneen**

THE FAREWELL ADDRESS is a short but profound masterpiece. Direct, compact, and riveting, in an economy of words it drives to the heart of America’s modern crisis: our loss of republican liberty in the name of power and liberation. Although Eisenhower’s admonitions about the rise of the military-industrial complex attract the most attention, equally worthy of note is his second theme, the dangers of the “technological revolution.”

America might be called the technological republic—born, nurtured, and raised to its mighty stature by its close affiliation with the modern scientific project. Befitting its creation during the Age of Reason, America’s heroes have often been its inventors and scientists, from Benjamin Franklin to Carl Sagan. If other nations can claim great theoreticians—the Darwins and Mendels and Heisenbergs—the reputation of American science lies more in its applications. As Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in 1835, “the more democratic, enlightened, and free a nation is, the greater will be the number of these interested promoters of scientific genius and the more will discoveries immediately applicable to productive industry confer on their authors gain, fame, and even power.”

The United States was self-consciously founded as a polity based upon technical knowledge. In the *Federalist Papers*, Alexander Hamilton attributed the proposed Constitution’s inspiration to “the new science of politics,” premised upon “reflection and choice” and no longer relying upon the unconscious accumulation of ancient practice, prejudice, and tradition, which he equated with “accident and force.” Reflecting this modern faith, the Constitution has been described as “the machine that would go of itself,” and the colonial physician Benjamin Rush characterized its citizenry as “republican machines.”

Later, John Dewey would argue that democracy and science were effectively indistinguishable, both predicated upon unending experimentation and progress, both devoted to the expansion of human power. Today Americans have an overwhelmingly favorable attitude toward science and scientists, with 84 percent stating their view to be “mostly positive,” according to a 2009 Pew Research Center poll.

Yet American confidence in scientific progress is met by equally longstanding misgivings about the costs of technology upon nature, community, and the human soul. Early voices

such as Nathaniel Hawthorne warned of the deforming aspects of “the machine in the garden,” and a steady line of critics have expressed deep reservations in the varying refrains of religion, naturalism, and literature. Defenders of the natural order from Henry David Thoreau to Aldo Leopold to Wendell Berry have argued against the role of modern science in the decimation of the natural world and in fostering an ethic of plunder.

At the heart of this internal division is a disagreement over the nature of liberty, that permanent if contested American aspiration. According to the originators of the modern scientific project—especially Francis Bacon, considered by Thomas Jefferson to be one of the three greatest minds in human history—science would liberate humanity from the limits imposed by nature. Bacon said, “knowledge is power,” and modern science is the means to that empowering knowledge. This Baconian confidence is given official sanction in Article 1 of the Constitution, requiring Congress to support “the progress of Science and useful Arts.”

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“Eisenhower acknowledges that liberty depends not only on America’s ability to develop technological responses to international threats, but also on America’s capacity to govern the consequences of the scientific imperative itself.”

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The voices cautioning against America’s embrace of science invoke an ancient idea of liberty as self-government. In this tradition, slavery is seen not primarily as subordination to another—a condition in which one’s soul could be free—but rather as submission to one’s unrestrained appetite. These Cassandras warned that the scientific project would lead not to thoroughgoing freedom, but instead to a more profound bondage, including the prospect that we would cease to possess the inclination or ability to control the very creations of science itself. They admonished against the tendency of liberty badly-defined to treat all relations—whether with the world or with other humans—in purely utilitarian terms, making the world and its living inhabitants fodder for our pleasure.

What makes the Farewell Address so extraordinary is that Eisenhower acknowledges that liberty depends not only on America’s ability to develop appropriate scientific and technological responses to great international threats, but also on America’s capacity to govern the consequences of the scientific imperative itself. Eisenhower saw clearly that America’s resistance to the temptations of power was giving way to the

demands of a permanent garrison state. The project of defending American liberty would require a massive expansion of government—particularly the executive—and the extensive influence of military players in the political process would increase the need for “secrecy and dispatch.” But more, the dependence upon science would decisively tip the scale toward liberty conceived as the overcoming of nature, premised upon an unrelenting expansion of power.

No section of Eisenhower’s address gives more compelling witness to this fear than his warning that the military-industrial-scientific complex’s demands would require the transformation of the university. His prophecy—which has become history—not only portended the death knell of “free ideas,” but the demise of the university’s historic role in providing reflective cautions about the pursuit of forbidden knowledge. Instead, the academy has given itself over to forms of inquiry with the ultimate aim of overcoming human nature.

Today every research university measures itself against its peers by calculating comparative amounts of federal grant funds; meanwhile, the un-useful liberal arts decline in esteem, size, even presence. This demotion overturns a tradition that located liberty’s source not in the untrammelled expansion of scientific knowledge, but in the liberal (and civic) arts—those subjects that educated free citizens in the discipline of self-government.

Tocqueville discerned over 125 years before Eisenhower that the utilitarian pursuit of scientific knowledge would imperil democracy, above all by leading men to live and think in the short term. “To minds thus predisposed, every new method that leads by a shorter road to wealth, every machine that spares labor, every instrument that diminishes the cost of production, every discovery that facilitates pleasures or augments them, seems to be the grandest effort of the human intellect. It is chiefly from these motives that a democratic people addicts itself to scientific pursuits.” In a brief but telling section of his address, Eisenhower warns against the tendency to “live only for today,” urging his fellow citizens to think in terms of generational debts and obligations lest democracy become “the insolvent phantasm of tomorrow.”

We now tend to think our various forms of insolvency—economic, certainly; in natural resources, as gathering evidence suggests; and morally, at the root of our bankruptcy—can be answered by the application of better scientific technique. What America’s second voice has warned all along, and what Eisenhower powerfully articulated 50 years ago, was that our faith in science will not save us, but may in fact be the very source of our insolvency. What is needed instead is a sounder idea of liberty—in which (to paraphrase the forgotten second verse of “America the Beautiful”) we confirm our soul in self-control and find liberty in law. ■

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# I Don't Like Ike

He vastly expanded the garrison state.

**By Llewellyn H. Rockwell Jr.**

EISENHOWER'S FAREWELL speech was a long and nearly hysterical argument for the Cold War. He presented it as more than a military policy against Russia, but rather as a grand metaphysical struggle that should take over our minds and souls, as bizarre as that must sound to the current generation.

His words were Wilsonian, even messianic. The job of U.S. military policy is to "foster progress in human achievement" and enhance "dignity and integrity" the world over. That's a rather expansive role for government by any standard. But he went further. An enemy stands in the way of achieving this dream, and this enemy is "global in scope, atheistic in character, ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method." This great struggle "commands our whole attention, absorbs our very beings."

Because some crusty apparatchiks are imposing every manner of economic control over Russia and a few satellites, U.S. foreign policy must absorb the whole of our beings? So much for limited government.

The rhetoric had to be hysterical to overcome a few obvious problems. Russia is a faraway country and the notion of an invasion was about as likely as one from Mars. Russia, an authoritarian state operating under the ideological cover of Communism, had only a few years earlier been declared our valiant ally in the struggle against Japan and Germany.

But Americans woke up one day to find that the line had suddenly changed: now Russia was the enemy to be defeated. In fact, the Russian government—already in deep economic trouble as a socialist regime—was bankrupted by World War II and dealing with incredible internal problems. The Soviets couldn't begin to manage the world of Eastern Europe that had been given as a prize for being the ally of the United States during the war. It was for this reason that Nikita Khrushchev began the first great period of liberalization that would end in the eventual unraveling of this nonviable state. The U.S. not only failed to encourage this liberalization, but pretended it wasn't happening so as to build up a new form of socialism at home.

Indeed, the entire Cold War ideology was invented by Harry Truman and his advisers in 1948 as: 1.) a political trick to keep from losing more congressional backing, 2.) a way to circumvent political pressure for postwar disarmament, and 3.) a method to maintain U.S. industrial dependence on government spending, particularly with regard to American corporations operating overseas.

It was an unprecedented form of peacetime socialism, designed to appeal to big business, and Eisenhower became its spokesman. Savvy libertarians knew exactly what was

going on and supported Cold War opponent Robert Taft for the Republican nomination in 1952. But the nomination was effectively stolen by Eisenhower, with massive establishment backing. He repaid his backers with his support and expansion of Truman's program.

It's true that his farewell speech warned against "unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex," and this is the part that people remember. But Eisenhower himself entrenched this very machinery in American life, virtually inventing the peacetime armaments industry and imposing military regimentation on the country. His approach was fundamentally un-American; or, another way to put it, he redefined what it meant to be an American. Instead of a free people, he forged a program for the permanent militarization of the country.

The evidence for this militarization begins with massive increases in military spending. As a percent of total budget outlays, military spending went from 30 percent in 1950 to 70 percent in 1957. This was the largest peacetime buildup in American history. During a dramatic economic expansion, the president worked to maintain a high military spending level as a percentage of the rising GDP—establishing the modern precedent that military socialism is integral to the economic life of the country. Spending rose in absolute terms every year he was president, from \$358 billion in 1952 to \$585 billion in the last budget for which he bore responsibility in 1962, a whopping 63.4 percent increase during the Eisenhower years.

His buildup was not limited to the arms sector; it penetrated every aspect of civilian life. Our schools were made to feature scary and abusive drills to practice what children should do if the Russians should drop bombs on their heads. An entire generation was raised with irrational fears of mythical threats.

Then there was the catastrophic Interstate Highway System, which was not built to make your trip to the beach go faster. Its purpose was to permit the military to move troops quickly. There were also cockamamie schemes of driving nuclear bombs around on those highways to prevent the commies from keeping track of them.

Eisenhower was influenced in funding this amazing boondoggle by his experience in 1919 with the Transcontinental Convoy on the Lincoln Highway, which drove military trucks from one coast to the other. Another influence was Hitler's project of building cross-country roads, again to move troops. The Interstate Highway System led to huge population upheavals and continues to distort commercial demographics in every town in the United States.

Given all this, the notion that Eisenhower was worried about the military-industrial complex is preposterous. He was devoted to it. ■

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# The Other Eisenhowers

Ike's anti-militarist roots

By Bill Kauffman

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER'S MOTHER was a pacifist, a breed common in the Middle America of yore, before war became the national religion. Her son left Kansas to climb the martial ladder of the Department of War, whose motto, suggested Declaration of Independence signatory Benjamin Rush, should have been "A Widow and Orphan making office." It was also the greatest deracinating force in American history; Dwight, unlike Dorothy and Toto, never returned to the Sunflower State.

Old men grow sentimentally pensive, and one wonders if President Eisenhower's sober and remarkable Farewell Address counseling vigilance against the "military-industrial complex"—delivered 50 years ago over the televisions that even then were addling America—echoes, however faintly, Ida Eisenhower's Mennonite convictions. It surely is redolent of his older brother and frequent correspondent Edgar, the Tacoma attorney who in most Eisenhower biographies gets a walk-on as the crusty reactionary pestering the moderate Ike to repeal the New Deal and support the Bricker Amendment, that last gasp of the Old Right.

The president's son John, in his memoir *Strictly Personal*, writes affectionately that Uncle Ed "considered President Roosevelt a work of the devil." No jingo chickenhawk of the sort whose squawk dominates today's Right, Ed tried to talk John out of a career in the military: "he declared that I should forego any ideas of becoming a 'professional killer' and go to law school at his expense, later to join his law office."

This language—"professional killer"—marked Edgar Eisenhower as an anachronism among the placeless technocrats who were busy engineering the Empire of Euphemism. Organization men like Robert McNamara and McGeorge Bundy could no more understand Edgar Eisenhower than they could dig Jack Kerouac or Paul Goodman.

In his new study of Ike's valediction, *Unwarranted Influence*, James Ledbetter places the Farewell Address within a thematic range that stretches from North Dakota Senator Gerald Nye's 1930s investigation of the "merchants of death" to the power-elite analysis of C. Wright Mills and his idealistic admirers in Students for a Democratic Society. Speechwriters Malcolm Moos and Capt. Ralph Williams—perhaps younger brother Milton Eisenhower, too—crafted much of the address, but its concerns were those of the president, who later wrote in *Waging Peace*: "During the years of my Presidency, and especially the latter years, I began to feel more and more uneasiness about the effect on the nation of tremendous peacetime military expenditures." (How many

Republican members of the 112th Congress would nod assent: ten, at most?)

The somber dignity with which Eisenhower left office ought not to obscure his administration's disgraceful interventions abroad (Iran, Guatemala) and at home (the Interstate Highway System, the National Defense Education Act). For those who preferred the American Republic to the American Empire, Ohio Sen. Robert Taft was the GOP choice in 1952.

Yet Ike was the last president confident enough to name, and even sometimes take on, the military-industrial complex. He lamented the "appalling costs" of the war machine and worried that a "garrison state" might arise in freedom's erstwhile land. He was justly furious to be reproved as soft on defense by such hawkish Democrats as the Pulitzer Prize-winning PT boat hero and devoted husband John F. Kennedy.

In his twilight, my old boss, Sen. Pat Moynihan, a Kennedy loyalist, was unsettled in Eisenhower-like ways by the seeming permanence of the national-security state, enshrouded in its miasmic secrecy. The new collection *Daniel Patrick Moynihan: A Portrait in Letters of an American Visionary*, contains a Sept. 8, 1990, letter to Erwin N. Griswold, former dean of Harvard Law

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**"Ike was the last president confident enough to name, and even sometimes take on, the military-industrial complex."**

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School, in which Moynihan grandiloquently—that is, characteristically—announces, "I have one purpose left in life; or at least in the Senate. It is to try to sort out what would be involved in reconstituting the American government in the aftermath of the cold war. Huge changes took place, some of which we hardly notice."

Two months later, in a letter to constituents—which Moynihan, unlike most members of Congress this side of Tennessee's Jimmy Duncan and my late friend Barber Conable, wrote himself—the senator "wondered ... whether we any longer knew how" to be a "nation essentially at peace with the rest of the world."

We do not. Since 1941, war has warped American life. Only the doddering and the dotards among us have lived in an America that is not armed, aggressive, and perpetually at war. If you would seek those who know what an America at peace is like, visit the nursing home. If you would hear the sounds of America at war, walk the corridors of a veterans' hospital. Listen to the shrieks and sobs—the keening for the lost America of Ida and Edgar Eisenhower. ■

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*Bill Kauffman's latest book is* Bye Bye, Miss American Empire: Neighborhood Patriots, Backcountry Rebels, and Their Underdog Crusades to Redraw America's Political Map



## A Tea Party Defense Budget

Tea Partiers rightly fear national ruin unless government spending is reduced. The numbers quickly show such reductions must include the defense budget. The

national-security state devours about half of all “discretionary” federal spending. Years ago, Sen. Charles Grassley said to President Ronald Reagan, “It’s great that you are going after the welfare queens, Mr. President. But when are you going to go after the welfare queens in the Pentagon?” The Tea Party, to achieve its goals, must answer, “Now.”

Bean-counting won’t do the job. For meaningful savings, we must begin by changing our grand strategy, which presently defines virtually everything that happens in the world as an American interest. Against the Founders’ advice, we are not only playing the great power game, we are attempting to be the globe’s dominant power.

In consequence, America does not today have a defense budget. It has an empire budget—perhaps the Tea Party should call it that. Derailing the neo-cons’ (and neolib’s) imperial ambitions and returning to the defensive grand strategy America followed through most of her history would save not tens but hundreds of billions of dollars.

We would no longer need a 3:1 “rotation base” for forward-deployed forces because we would no longer have forward-deployed forces. More important, we would have fewer enemies because we would not be inserting our nose into everyone else’s quarrels. That is true national security: reducing the threat by not posing a threat.

A second large tranche of savings would come from designing and equipping our forces for tomorrow’s wars—those that are forced upon us—not yes-

terday’s. Almost all the ships, planes, and weapons we are buying are designed for conflicts against other states. They are useless or worse for Fourth Generation wars against non-state opponents. Why do we need the F-22 and F-35 fighter aircraft? To shoot down Taliban flying carpets.

Canceling the programs—not just reducing the buys—would save tens of billions now and later. (The more complex the system, the higher its maintenance costs.)

The Pentagon will howl, “How can you be certain we won’t fight other states?” It will furiously puff the dragon—the “Chinese threat.”

**AGAINST THE FOUNDERS’ ADVICE, WE ARE NOT ONLY PLAYING THE GREAT POWER GAME, WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO BE THE GLOBE’S DOMINANT POWER.**

The answer, again, is strategic. We refuse to plan for wars against other states, including China, because the real winners are likely to be the 21st century’s main danger, nonstate elements. The defeated state in a war between nations is likely to collapse, like Iraq, creating a Petri dish for nonstate entities. If the price of victory is too high, the winner may go the same route. Our strategic preference, in a time when the main division will be between centers of order and centers of disorder, should be for strong, orderly states, including China.

A third source of savings arises from the fact that we have far too many support elements for our relatively few

combat units. Called the “tooth-to-tail ratio,” Congress has investigated it for years, with small results. The reason is that Congress sees it as an efficiency issue, when it is actually a doctrinal one. Our armed forces remain structured for Second Generation wars—think World War I on the Western Front—where the guiding assumption is that almost all combat units are engaged most of the time. Each therefore requires a large, dedicated “tail.” If we shift to Third Generation doctrine, maneuver warfare, the new assumption is that most of the time most combat units are in reserve, waiting to maneuver. Dedicated tails are small; logistical support is given mainly to the few units in contact. The tooth-to-tail ratio rises dramatically.

As the defense budget is cut, it will be important to insist that all reductions come from the tail. Combat units, espe-

cially ground combat, are few enough already. The Pentagon will want to do the opposite, mothballing front-line units while preserving the bureaucracy. The Tea Party must say “No.”

What would all this add up to? An achievable target would be a defense budget of around \$100 billion. That would still be the largest in the world. But the Pentagon’s welfare queens would have to look for real jobs—not just the vast surplus of field grade and senior officers, but the DOD civilians, hordes of contractors, and best of all the lobbyists of Gucci gulf. Fear not, boys, there are lots of houses that need cleaning. Starting with yours. ■



# Coburn's Burden

Fiscal discipline is a moral issue for the Oklahoma senator — and that puts him at odds with his own party.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

"REPUBLICS LAST a limited amount of time," says Tom Coburn, "and they start to fail on fiscal issues, so there's no surprise where we are." Legs crossed, hands resting on the edge of a small armchair, the Oklahoma senator looks perfectly ready for a difficult fight over government spending. "If we do nothing, the middle class will be decimated. We'll have a large lower class with marginal incomes and a tiny wealthy elite," he continues. "That's what happens to all of the countries that go through what we're going through, if you don't fix it." How calmly he states this is almost unnerving.

A large flat-panel television hangs in the lobby of Coburn's office. Most senators have sets playing Fox News, CNN, or C-SPAN, hoping to catch a glimpse of themselves. Coburn's is tuned to USDebtClock.org, a website with over 50 live metrics. National debt, average household debt, M2 money supply, interest on debt, debt held by foreign countries—the numbers zoom by. Over \$13 trillion in United States debt. Nearly \$800 billion in Medicare and Medicaid obligations every year. \$690 billion for defense and wars. More than \$77 trillion in total Medicare liabilities. The chart whirs like a fiscal doomsday machine.

Phones rang nonstop as I visited Coburn's office. Sean, a junior staffer, patiently explained to one caller, "There has been some disinformation in the conservative media. The senator has never voted for a tax increase." Ring!

Another staffer, Laura: "Good afternoon, Dr. Coburn's office. No this wasn't a bill, and it won't raise your taxes. But the senator is for closing some loopholes in the tax code." Ring! "Good afternoon, Dr. Coburn's office. I assure you, the senator agrees with you, it is unconstitutional."

Dick Morris, the former Clinton political advisor who now gabs with Sean Hannity on Fox, had attacked Coburn that day because he voted for the recommendations of Obama's deficit-reduction panel. The Simpson-Bowles plan contained a battery of spending limitations and cuts balanced with some new taxes. Coburn cast his vote acknowledging that some of these measures might be "intolerable," but that it was a first step to averting a financial apocalypse. "The problem is so real, Tom Coburn can't have what he wants," he said. For this lack of partisanship, Morris screeched that Coburn "betrayed us." He blasted the senator's office number to newsletter subscribers. Republican supporters of the reform, Morris complained, "never said anything about endorsing big tax increases as soon as the ballots were cast. They hid their true intentions from us!"

It was once impossible to imagine Coburn being attacked from the right or building bridges with Democrats. He was considered a right-wing berserker himself. Bridges between the parties, bridges to the 21st century, bridges to nowhere—Coburn demolished them all.

He characterized one of his campaigns as a battle of "good versus evil." He has mused about Oklahoma schools "where lesbianism is rampant." He has earned the same moniker as Ron Paul—"Dr. No"—for the stumbling block he presents to business as usual in the Senate.

Liberals have long found him unpalatable. Earlier this year, Coburn put a hold on funds for war-ravaged Uganda because senators had inserted pet projects into the bill. Progressives went apoplectic. "I totally get that Tom Coburn is a man of principle," wrote commentator Matt Yglesias. "He thinks that minimizing federal spending is very important and preventing the rape, kidnap, and massacre of children is much less important." Yglesias went on to call Coburn a "moral monster, guided by a poisonously misguided ethical compass and a callous disregard for human welfare"

But as the country's fiscal outlook darkens, Coburn is coming into this own. "We're not even willing to have a debate about having a debate," he said after being blasted by Morris. The clock keeps ticking down, and one of the putative thought-leaders of the conservative movement was playing a phone prank on him—just the sort of "gotcha" Coburn had denounced on the Senate floor a day earlier. "Congratulations, somebody embarrassed somebody else. How does it feel? ... Who cares who is in charge if there is no country left to be salvaged?"

How is it that arguably the most rigid conservative in the Senate is now threatening to transcend politics to save America from financial ruin?

Coburn has always been an odd figure. His biography shows almost no interest in politics until he began running for office. A son of Casper, Wyoming, Coburn attended business school in Oklahoma and married 1967's Miss Oklahoma, Carolyn Denton. He became a deacon at his local Baptist Church, where he still serves. But his life hit a turning point when he was diagnosed with melanoma and told that the depth of the cancer was so serious he had only a 20 percent chance of survival. "Facing death put my priorities in perspective in a hurry," he wrote in his book, *Breach of Trust*. He left his business ventures to attend medical school, where he specialized in obstetrics.

Coburn says his political passions were stirred during his years of private practice. "I had to hire extra assistants just to deal with the torrent of paperwork generated by government agencies and insurance companies," he recalls. In 1994 his Democratic congressman, Mike Synar, talked about nationalizing healthcare. Coburn decided to challenge him. Thinking back to his doubts about running, he says, "I don't have a coy bone in my body. I was too direct and bullheaded for the 'go-along-get-along' world of politics." Coburn launched his political career in front of eight supporters, announcing that his campaign "pits the conservative people of the second district against a liberal Washington-based elite." A humble beginning, but his sensibility proved right for the time, and he was swept into office with the Republican tide that November.

Congressman Coburn quickly gained a reputation as a fiery social conservative. He protested the airing of "Schindler's List" in prime time on NBC,

saying it was an "all-time low, with full-frontal nudity, violence and profanity." (After an uproar, he clarified that he believed the film should have been shown at a later hour.) He remains an implacable foe of abortion who receives perfect scores from National Right to Life, and he has gone as far as to say, "I favor the death penalty for abortionists and other people who take life." He opposes attempts to legalize same-sex marriage and is not afraid to sound alarmist when he is alarmed. He was widely quoted during his 2004 Senate campaign as saying, "The gay community has infiltrated the very centers of power in every area across this country, and they wield extreme power."

He will give Christian testimony whenever asked, but Coburn leaves overtly religious language out of his political rhetoric. His focus instead has been on the woes that befall a nation that cannot reform its entitlements.

IT WAS ONCE IMPOSSIBLE TO IMAGINE **COBURN BEING ATTACKED FROM THE RIGHT OR BUILDING BRIDGES WITH DEMOCRATS**. HE WAS CONSIDERED A **RIGHT-WING BERSERKER HIMSELF**.

Journalist John J. Miller remarked that Coburn's stump speeches often consist of him having "Socratic dialogues with himself over exactly what year in the future Social Security will go belly-up."

In the House, Coburn fit naturally with a group of staunch conservatives—including Steve Largent, Joe Scarborough, and Mark Sanford—who often clashed with Newt Gingrich. "We were told we were joining a fight to downsize the government," he recalls, "but it became evident after a few years that wasn't where the ship was going. It had more to do with fighting the Democrats than solving problems." Coburn took up the mantle of opposition from within the

party in power and was credited by *USA Today* with shaving \$1 billion from the 1999 federal budget "almost singlehandedly." He kept to his promise to limit himself to three terms and left Congress in 2001.

After a second struggle for his life, this time with colon cancer, he heeded the calls of conservative activist groups like the Club for Growth and ran for the Senate. In the upper chamber, Coburn quickly made himself a nuisance to colleagues, even those in his own party. It was Coburn who shamed other Republicans over the \$200 million "Bridge to Nowhere" in Alaska. The moment Coburn proposed eliminating the bridge, Ted Stevens came tearing through the chamber, huffing that his fellow legislators must protect this project or he would quit the Senate. "If you want a wounded bull on the floor of the Senate, pass this amendment," Stevens dared. The Senate voted 82-15 for the bridge and the bull.

Coburn has made his war on pork something of a crusade. In the spring of 2006, as the Senate prepared to lard up a \$92 billion emergency supplemental bill with an extra \$14 billion in pet projects, Coburn offered an amendment to strip out 19 of the most indefensible items, then used a parliamentary maneuver to force his colleagues to debate each of them separately. Coburn called it the "Clay Pigeon" strategy. One of his targets was a \$500 million bonus from Trent Lott to military contractor Northrop Grumman. Another was a \$5 million giveaway from Richard Shelby to the Alabama seafood industry for "promotional materials."

Asked if concentrating on pork-barrel spending is a mistake when the much larger budget drains are in entitlements and defense, Coburn leans forward. "It's the same issue. We still use parochial projects to grease the skids to get things to pass." He points to the upcoming omnibus bill that will be loaded with pork again. "We ought to be passing a bill that's markedly reduced that would send the signal to the American people and to the international financial community that we are getting serious... This is going to require sacrifice from everyone, including legislators"

Coburn knows something of that process already. He sacrificed some partisan credibility by voting to endorse Simpson-Bowles. But when asked what else he and his fellow conservatives might have to sacrifice, Coburn offers small cuts, returning to pork-barrel projects and adding, "we need to sacrifice our personal office budgets."

This may be Coburn's blind spot. His jeremiads are often about pennies lost in the couch cushions—pork-barrel spending accounts for around 1 percent of the federal budget—while larger outlays escape criticism. Some his colleagues have noticed. "In the case of [Coburn], who votes for very large expensive bills like the \$700 billion bailout and then turns around and makes a big issue out of something that is very small, like a control tower for an advanced Air Force base, it's just to me—it's difficult to hear," his fellow senator from Oklahoma, James Inhofe, told *Politico*. "That's 1,000 times more than all earmarks that I would have attempted to get. .... [Coburn's] clearly politically correct on this. And I'm clearly politically incorrect on this, but I'm right."

Though he doesn't articulate it, Coburn's passion for fiscal matters cannot be explained by actuarial concerns alone. Americans would be happy to pay for his office budget—the federal

government won't make up its deficit by cutting people like Sean and Laura or the legislative assistants who give Coburn the issue expertise that would be otherwise be supplied by lobbyists. The real punch to America's wallet is paying for Dick Morris's Social Security and Medicare—not to mention his foreign policy. But for Coburn, financial rectitude and moral rectitude are roughly equivalent. Pork corrupts politi-

**FOR COBURN, FINANCIAL RECTITUDE AND MORAL RECTITUDE ARE ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT. PORK CORRUPTS POLITICIANS.**

cians. Office budgets are a personal excess. And Washington's petty financial corruption has infected the rest of the country, debilitating the character of its people.

"We've gone from self-reliance to dependence," he offers as a diagnosis. "It is cultural," he says, "but where did they learn that? From us." Coburn's conviction that leaders must be moral is as fierce as St. Paul's. Though he says Newt Gingrich is "probably the smartest man I'll ever know," he has said that Gingrich is "the last person I'd vote for for president of the United States. ... His life indicates he does not have a commitment to the character traits necessary to be a great president."

To his credit, Coburn does go after many big-ticket items in the budget, even in defense. And he makes some politically daring criticisms of the Pentagon. "When you can come out of the military after 20 years and get healthcare for you and your family for \$486 a year, when everyone else is paying over \$4,000, it has to stop; it's going to stop." He doesn't agree with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates that the military should look for \$100 billion in savings only to spend it elsewhere. "I want to take \$100 billion away from them."

He loathes the inefficiency of a procurement system that lets military contractors reap billions in profits without ever risking their own capital or facing pressure to deliver on time. And he goes further than his GOP colleagues in demanding that money sent overseas be accounted for. "The attitude of the Defense Department is that we can't track the money in a foreign country. Well then you don't give them the

money. It's easy." He seems happy with the balance struck in the Simpson-Bowles proposals, where 50 percent of federal spending cuts come from defense. "That's going to force that reassessment," he says, "We have to take a look at all these bases in Germany."

But Coburn subscribes to no discernable doctrine on foreign policy, beyond getting a return on investment. During his 2004 campaign, he defended Bush's decision to go to Iraq. But in 2008 he said, "I will tell you personally that I think it was probably a mistake going to Iraq." He denies himself the benefit of hindsight. "In all honesty, looking at what everyone made their decision on, I would have been with them," he says. But now, "Every one of us wants it to wind down as fast as it can. I think Iraq is going to do well, but it's not going to be without problems."

His specialty remains a wonkish approach to fiscal matters. During his interview with *TAC* he began his own Socratic dialogue about the status of the dollar as the world's reserve currency. "Have you seen what has happened to ten-year bond rates over the last three days? Since mid-October, you've seen a ten-year bill go from 9.4 percent to 10.8. Now extrapolate that on \$14 billion." He



sees no solution coming from the Federal Reserve. “Bernanke is locked in a negative feedback loop over there. I don’t care who is at the Federal Reserve, they cannot fix this problem until we fix the cultural one over here,” he says, gesturing to the Capitol.

The urgency of America’s long-term fiscal problems has turned Coburn’s hard-headed style into a form of leadership that remains conservative but breaks away from movement group-think. He has joined a small band of Republican lawmakers pushing for a consumption-based tax system. “Our tax code is based on a 1950s environment. And we’ve proven that no one understands it. Not even the IRS knows the ins and outs. The EU use a VAT tax that doesn’t apply to products they export, and so we’re no longer competitive with them. That has to change,” he says. Coburn has even supported capping the size of the big banks, in the hope that competition and diversity will protect the financial sector from systemic risk.

He believes that the nation’s long-term debt problems can be solved even now. “We can do it with this president,” he says, like a man indifferent to elections. He predicts that next year’s federal debt ceiling will not be raised without long-term cuts. “Austerity is the watchword for the next few years,” he says. “We’re either going to make sacrifices voluntarily or financiers are going to dictate the sacrifices to us. If we want any choices we need to make them now. They know this.” From almost any vantage point on the ideological spectrum, he appears ready to offend. He remains calm and congenial, if difficult. But the times are difficult too. ■

*Michael Brendan Dougherty is a TAC contributing editor and a contributor to Proud To Be Right: Voices of the Next Conservative Generation.*

# Tom Clancy’s “Brain-Dead or Alive”

By Tom Clancy

*Created by Tom Clancy’s Op-Center, written in collaboration with Gen. Tony Zinni (Ret.), Gen. Charles Horner (Ret.), Gen. Fred Franks (Ret.), and Chase Madar; videogame developed by FamVal/Tripesplatter Jr.*

IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY night in McLean, Virginia.

Former CIA director and ex-president Vernon Manley Babbitt sat at his dining-room table flanked by his most trusted compadres, who in many adventures past had defended the American way of life against nuclear terrorists, Islamic fanatics, and armed folk singers. Their next mission might be the most dangerous yet.

V. Manley Babbitt and his secret team called themselves the BFD, and their existence was so classified no one knew what the initials stood for. The BFD was licensed to do anything, from waterboarding the president’s mother to parking in handicapped spots, and with the safety of millions at stake, they often did. Babbitt surveyed his companions, tried and true, around the table.

First there was X, a man without an identity. Nobody knew X’s real name. Was it maybe just X? That kind of headfake would have been vintage X. No one even knew what X looked like, not even X’s wife, because he always wore a brown paper bag on his head. He had ex-Special Ops written all over him, but not on the paper bag, which usually bore the logo of the retail chain where his wife had done the previous day’s shopping.

On Babbitt’s left sat Peggy Sue Rayban, a spunky, whip-smart computer whiz who was always good with a wise crack.

“Hey X, nice bag! Are Obama’s taxes so high the wife has to shop at K-Mart now?” she quipped, hilariously.

“Ha ha ha ha ha,” they laughed, mirthfully.

Across the table was Babbitt’s son, V. Manley Babbitt Jr, a fine young man and young father himself. Straining to break out of his famous father’s legend, he had become a dealer in antique doilies. At least that was his cover for keeping an eye on domestic terrorists, many of whom found out too late that the Junior’s lisp was a put-on.

And there was their Jingo Rodriguez, the talking dog. It was Jingo who five years before had scent-ID’ed Babbitt’s vice president as an al-Qaeda sleeper agent. President Babbitt had had no other choice but to knife the traitor upon receipt of that communiqué, at a Lincoln Center tribute to Pearl Bailey. The pooch’s intel had turned out to be faulty, but there was no room for hand-wringing when the security of millions was at stake. The next day Babbitt had signed an executive order to keep his dog from being put down and had the veep’s widow and children sent to Guantanamo. But at least Jingo still valued loyalty, valor, and patriotism—qualities which, truth be told, had never been abundant in the late vice president.

Jingo Rodriguez was now equipped with a CVU—Canine Verbalization

Unit—developed at Quantico, which broadcast the dog’s thoughts in the reassuring tones of Donald Rumsfeld’s voice. Much of what came out of the CVU definitely qualified as TMI, but they valued Jingo’s input highly nonetheless.

V. Manley Babbitt cleared his throat. “Fellas, you know why I gathered you here on this dark and stormy night, and it wasn’t just for Chinese takeout. Listeners in Palau have picked up chatter that our old friend the Nadir is back, and he’s planning something big. If we don’t stop him first, millions will die. We need to get the Nadir. We need to get him, *dead or alive.*”

A clap of thunder and flash of lightning accentuated the direness.

The Nadir. Of all the superterrorists that V. Manley Babbitt had ever tangled with, none was as fiendish as the Nadir.

## BUT SOMETHING WAS OFF. THE MOOSHOO PORK HAD NO PORK, JUST ... TOFU.

Not that he hadn’t had competition. First there had been the Emir, who wrecked Babbitt’s dinner party for the Queen of England by telling long-winded stories, assassinating the Duke of Edinburgh, and sabotaging the soufflé. The BFD had struck back by booby-trapping Rod Stewart’s hairpiece at the Emir’s private birthday concert.

Then came the Fakir, who had hacked into the database of Babbitt’s philanthropic organization, which gifted armor-piercing bullets to kids with terminal cancer, and wreaked havoc with the charity’s finances, making a fool of Babbitt in front of all the world. The pay-back for that one had been personal alright, and it had not been pretty. But it had made a dozen dying kids very happy.

As for the Wazir, Babbitt’s team had scuttled his plot to trigger a nuclear exchange between Russia and China, and in the end only Russia was annihi-

lated. (Serendipitous, if you asked ex-president Babbitt, which the liberal media seldom did.)

The Wazir’s feminist eco-terrorist girlfriend, the Brassiere, had been trickier still. She and the ACLU had nearly forced the sitting president into a legally binding marriage contract with that year’s Kentucky Derby winner, an act that would have cleared a path to the Oval Office for the sleeper agent they had installed as Speaker of the House.

Yes, at great cost this entire rogues gallery of terror had been vanquished.

But not the Nadir.

Through rain-streaked windows they saw the Chinese delivery boy approach the front door. The DINGER—doorway imminent notification generated electronic responder—had been developed at Quantico to provide clear and certain

alert in case someone should wish to announce his presence at the door, all with the press of a button. Babbitt’s every muscle fiber tensed as the delivery boy’s gloved hand pushed the black circle: the electrons pulsed through the wires: wait for it, wait for it:

*Ding dong.*

“Okay, who gets the mooshoo pork? Egg roll? General Tso’s chicken?” Of course, compared to the Nadir, renegade Red Army general Tso had been a pushover, his defeat resulting only in the nuclear destruction of Bermuda, Palo Alto, and Taiwan. (Yep, Langley had no easy time hushing that one up.)

They dug hungrily into the greasy white takeout boxes. But the delivery boy stood there dumbly.

“Wassa matta?” said Peggy Sue Rayban, uproariously, “You no likey small tippy?”

“Ha ha ha ha ha,” they all responded, mirthfully.

But something was off. The mooshoo pork had no pork, just ... tofu. Similarly, the General Tso’s chicken was poultry-free. Suddenly, Babbitt’s head began to swim.

The Chinese delivery boy languorously removed his baseball cap and long ebony tresses cascaded down. He slipped off his gloves, revealing elegant lacquered nails. It was RuManchu, the vegan transgender North Korean eco-terrorist and life-partner (it was rumored from a Vermont source) of the Nadir!

Peggy Sue Rayban started to crack wise but fell over before the hilarious quip could leave her lips. X and Junior: also down. As the lights dimmed, RuManchu sashayed slowly towards V. Manley Babbitt, whose mind and body were now ablaze with conflicting and confused thoughts.

“Arf, arf! Stuff happens!” said Jingo. “Arf, arf! I’ll get help.” And with that Jingo jumped through the picture window, shattering the dark McLean night into a thousand jagged shards. If Babbitt knew his Jingo, the valiant dog would be heading directly for his son’s family home, where grandson V. Manley Babbitt III would most likely be playing Raghead Blaster 7 [matching novel created by Tom Clancy’s Op-Center, written by Cynthia Ozick with Gen. Ray Odierno] on his PlayStation this very moment. And his grandson, though only three-and-a-half, would surely know what to do.

For one thing was certain: it would take more than a mickey slipped into V. Manley Babbitt’s lo mein to end the American way of life as he knew it. One way or another, the Babbitts would reach their Nadir and bring him back, *brain-dead or alive!* ■

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*Tom Clancy’s name appears on many works of fiction, some of which he may have written. Ditto for Chase Madar, a lawyer in New York.*

# AIPAC on Trial

Steve Rosen was accused of spying. Now he accuses his former employer.

By Philip M. Giraldi

REPORTS OF SURFING porn sites and frequenting prostitutes are not what one expects to read about the leadership of Washington's most powerful foreign-policy lobby. But a bitter civil suit is bringing some of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's most sordid secrets to light. AIPAC is embroiled in a court battle with its former director of foreign-policy issues, Steven Rosen, who claims the committee first unfairly fired then slandered and libeled him for not exhibiting "the conduct that AIPAC expects from its employees." He is seeking damages totaling \$20 million.

AIPAC has successfully limited the case to the defamation charge, but attempts to have the suit dismissed outright have failed. Defeat for AIPAC could have serious consequences beyond a sudden shortage of donors—including increasing demands that the group register as a foreign lobby. Even criminal charges related to passing classified information to Israel, an offense under the Espionage Act, could be in the offing. There is some prospect that the trial could spin out of control, with proliferating charges and counter-charges leading to the effective dismantling of AIPAC.

The betting is that Rosen might accept an out-of-court settlement for most of the money he is seeking. But there are also reports that relations between Rosen and his former employer have become so poisonous that reconciliation is impossible. AIPAC is trying to discredit Rosen completely and is gathering a defense fund of between \$5 and \$10 million in an

attempt to salvage its reputation among the well-heeled donors who have until recently provided the group's \$70 million annual budget.

Rosen and his AIPAC colleague Keith Weissman were charged under the Espionage Act in 2003 after the FBI made the case that they had obtained classified information from Pentagon employee Larry Franklin and passed it on to Israeli diplomats and to journalist Glenn Kessler of the *Washington Post*. In 2005, the two men were fired by AIPAC in spite of the group's initial pledges of support. The espionage trial dragged on until May 1, 2009, when it was finally dismissed after the government could not make its case in the face of adverse decisions by presiding judge T.S. Ellis, possibly acting under pressure from the White House to end the proceedings.

As the centerpiece of his spy-trial defense, Rosen had claimed that passing classified information obtained from government contacts was business as usual in Washington. He asked that high-level witnesses including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley, former Defense Department officials Paul D. Wolfowitz and Douglas J. Feith, and former Deputy Secretary of State Richard L. Armitage be called to testify that confidential materials were frequently given to AIPAC for discreet relay to the Israeli Embassy. Rosen's lawyers also demanded access to numerous government documents to assist them in making their case. Those documents themselves would have been classified,

and prosecutors may have decided to abandon the case in the belief that more damage would be done by proceeding than by dropping it. Rosen and Weissman were not, however, either exonerated or acquitted, an indication that the government lawyers believed the prosecution to be a sound one.

Dismissing Rosen was a bad move by AIPAC, and he has since worked hard to get revenge. Recent moves and counter-moves by Rosen and AIPAC have included a 260-page motion by the organization filed Nov. 8 that makes a case in some detail that Rosen engaged in espionage, while distancing AIPAC itself from any involvement. Rosen and Weissman are being painted as a rogue operation not sanctioned by their employer. The motion also includes a lengthy deposition of Rosen in which he describes his own sexual "experimentations" with both men and women, some of whom he encountered through Craigslist. Rosen also recounts how pornography was regularly viewed and stored on AIPAC computers by a number of senior employees, including Director Howard Kohr and his secretary, and claims AIPAC officials visited prostitutes.

Rosen is expected to counter AIPAC's filing with his own motion, and there will be an obligatory mediation session with the presiding judge in mid-January. The cycle of attacks and rebuttals has not helped AIPAC's reputation, already tarnished by the lengthy Rosen-Weissman spy trial that led to the lawsuit. There are reports that donations have declined by 15 percent, with a number



of major contributors such as Haim Saban having opted instead to financially support Rosen, who insists that his betrayal by AIPAC's leadership was motivated by a desire to avoid criminal charges against its executives.

This effort to shield AIPAC's leadership was bolstered by a federal prosecutor who pressured the FBI to leave the group out of its investigation. Rosen tells the story in a July 2009 filing:

On February 17, 2005, only two weeks after awarding Mr. Rosen the \$7,000 special bonus for excellence in job performance, the AIPAC Board of Directors placed him on involuntary leave. This was done immediately after AIPAC was threatened by the Justice Department in a meeting between AIPAC's counsel and its Executive Director Howard Kohr and federal prosecutors on February 15, 2005. There the lead federal prosecutor stated that, 'We could make real progress and get AIPAC out from under all of this,' if AIPAC showed more cooperation with the government. On February 16, 2005, AIPAC's counsel said that the lead federal prosecutor 'is fighting with the FBI to limit the investigation to Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman and to avoid expanding it.' This warning implied that AIPAC's Executive Director and the AIPAC organization as a whole could become targets.

There is a much bigger story lurking in the background, involving the regular provision of top-level classified information from AIPAC to the media and the Israeli government, but no one is quite sure how it might play out. The November AIPAC motion and the Rosen deposition inadvertently demonstrate the close ties between AIPAC and the Israeli Embassy in Washington, recording as they do the details of numerous meet-

ings with diplomats and intelligence officers in which secret information was passed. For AIPAC to win its war of words with Rosen, it must demonstrate that he was indeed guilty of espionage "with a foreign country" while distancing itself from his activities and keeping Israel out of the story as far as possible.

Rosen, on the other hand, must turn the tables on AIPAC by proving that the organization collaborated in the collection and delivery of sensitive material to foreigners. He intends to replay the defense he had planned for his Espionage Act trial, asserting that passing classified information is a routine feature of life in Washington, particularly for those who work to advance Israel's interests. Rosen claims to have "about 180" documents that demonstrate that classified information was regularly collected by AIPAC and given to the Israeli Embassy with the full knowledge of the organization's executive director and other senior officials, something they have denied under oath. He also claims that depositions of FBI agents who questioned AIPAC officials will demonstrate that the collection and use of classified information was routine, generally known, and widely accepted within AIPAC.

Rosen has also indicated that he might broaden the inquiry. In September 2009, he filed a list of 48 prospective witnesses who might be called to testify. It included Douglas Bloomfield, Morris Amitay, Thomas Dine, Elliott Abrams, John Bolton, Martin Indyk, David Satterfield, Kenneth Pollack, Malcolm Hoenlein, and Abraham Foxman. All are major figures in the Israel lobby. Rosen may want to demonstrate that passing secrets to the Israeli government was standard operating procedure for many groups and individuals, not just AIPAC. The tactic would motivate those named and the organizations they represent to pressure AIPAC to settle the suit with Rosen whatever the cost.

What is ultimately at stake is the powerful mystique AIPAC derives from its status as a foreign lobby posing as a domestic lobby, an organization so untouchable that it does not have to register with the Justice Department or play by anyone's rules but its own. Even if the Obama administration opts not to prosecute any criminal activity that might be discovered, the exposure of trading in classified information would render disingenuous the argument that AIPAC should not have to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) because it only operates domestically and its focus is educational.

But those who see a dark future for AIPAC fail to reckon with its strengths, which include an endowment of \$50 million that can be tapped in emergencies. It continues to wield considerable influence within the Obama administration and with Congress. AIPAC has connections deep inside the Justice Department that will make sure the organization is advised of every impending move against it. Those connections will do everything they can to impede any investigation that might lead to criminal charges or compel AIPAC to register under FARA.

Then there is the media's role—or rather, the lack of one. The mainstream press assiduously avoided the story of the Rosen-Weissman trial and has not reported on the Rosen-AIPAC suit, with the exception of a few brave souls like Jeff Stein in his *Spy Talk* column at the *Washington Post*. If the federal government prefers not to prosecute a clear violation of the law, and if the media does not report its failure to do so, then even the scandals brought to light by Rosen will be only a moment's distraction for America's most powerful, least accountable lobbying group. ■

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*Philip M. Giraldi, a former CIA officer, is executive director of the Council for the National Interest.*

# Dignity Doesn't Fly

Peepshow scanners may not catch terrorists, but who says they're supposed to?

By Brian Doherty

THAT THE TRANSPORTATION Security Administration (TSA) has saved a single life is unproven and doubtful. But it did something good for the country last fall by provoking a long overdue reaction against bureaucratic bullying.

The TSA has been rolling out more of its "Advanced Imaging Technology" scanners, with the goal of having 1,000 in service by the end of 2011, covering around half of the security lanes at our nation's airports. These machines demand more of us than just striding through, as with the traditional metal detector. That can be done with some semblance of dignity.

The new scanners that stand between us and our right to travel freely—a right hallowed in Western tradition back to Magna Carta, where movement in and out of the realm was protected even for foreigners—require us to stop and spread our limbs submissively. We are then doused with X-rays or millimeter waves to produce a bizarrely inhuman yet laid-bare image for a bureaucrat to contemplate, ogle, or blankly run his tired eyes over. Anyone who refuses to submit to this electromagnetic strip search is required by TSA policy to undergo a very thorough pawing and pat down, including between the legs.

Yet shortly before Thanksgiving, one brave American, John Tyner, became a national hero for recording himself resisting a TSA agent's attempts to molest him at the San Diego airport, an incident that popularized the slogan "don't touch my junk!" The idea that the TSA was ramping up its assaults on our

dignity and privacy for no discernable benefit swept the country. The push back culminated in organized calls for everyone to opt out of the scans on the day before Thanksgiving—overcome the system by overloading it.

The new technologies are undignified and meant to be. The illusion of choice surrounding their use is intended to funnel us into an even more undignified situation. Be exposed electronically in full, or physically molested, or go back home. These are unprecedented demands on Americans moving through the theoretically free world, not some penitentiary or asylum.

But the principles behind the TSA's new strategies are very old. Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon is being built in miniature, but with an even wider angle of view. While the 19th-century utilitarian philosopher Bentham dreamed of a system that could keep watch at all times over particular classes in need of surveillance—he was thinking of prisoners, students, and workhouse denizens—the American Panopticon gazes upon any air traveler without regard to criminal background or mental history.

A second philosopher who saw this coming was Michel Foucault. What Foucault wrote about the insane asylum's effect upon its inmates applies eerily and equally well to what the TSA does to everyone who passes through its screen: "The problem is to impose, in a universal form, a morality that will prevail from within upon those who are strangers to it." Sadly, given the number of Ameri-

cans who reacted to November's anti-TSA furor with a hearty "who cares if you have to be watched or grabbed in order to travel? The experts say it's needed," the TSA appears to have succeeded in constructing a new morality.

These bureaucratic procedures quickly assume all the privileges of reality, as if they are an external force that no American in his right mind should waste time fighting. It is disconcerting to me how often I find people who lived through those days forgetting that as recently as 1995 one could get on a plane anonymously, without showing any papers, beyond a ticket, to anyone.

But it is heartening that the rituals of resistance are in play against the latest power-grab. Some pranksterish Americans have taken to selling undergarments with the Fourth Amendment printed on them in metallic ink that will supposedly show up clearly over your image on the new scanners. Meanwhile stories of petty-tyrannical behavior from TSA agents stream forth. The TSA itself knows its agents are not to be relied on to understand their own rules. Its website assures us that we have the right to turn the Panopticon back on the state, in our own small way, by filming at airport checkpoints in a non-intrusive way. But the site also tells us to be aware we are likely to be harassed for doing so anyway.

The institutional players are acting their parts in the resistance rituals. The ACLU has collected over 900 stories about TSA abuses from aggrieved Americans. The Electronic Privacy Informa-

tion Center has filed a lawsuit challenging the Fourth Amendment constitutionality of the scans and patdowns. Rep. Ron Paul has offered a bill mandating that TSA agents should have no legal immunity for whatever assaults they commit on unwilling Americans in the course of their work. But congressional oversight of the TSA is meaningless—already deputized by Congress to do whatever it decides is necessary, TSA need not care what we think of it.

The TSA has created the perfect enemy for any bureaucracy: one that can never be defeated, that could be anyone, and that creates excuses to funnel money to favored interests until the end of time. It does not matter that the Government Accountability Office and various security and imaging experts have noted that the new scanners might not have detected the “underpants bomber” whose attempt to blow up a flight to Detroit on Christmas 2009 provided the pretext for the new measures. The scanners produce images sharp enough to rob Americans of their dignity, but not sufficiently clear to detect flat, irregularly shaped explosives worn close to the body, according to Leon Kaufman and Joseph W. Carlson’s study “An evaluation of airport X-ray backscatter units based on image characteristics” in the *Journal of Transportation Security*.

The revolt against TSA by Tyner and other citizens fed up with the surveillance state gave a few of us a momentary feeling of real security—grounded in an enduring American spirit of dignity and resistance to tyranny. But that proved to be as illusory as the safety offered by the agency’s blind yet all-seeing machines. ■

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### **Diplomatic cables published by WikiLeaks revealed that Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton had ordered American diplomats to collect personal information**

about United Nations diplomats. The orders are in fact part of a much broader CIA program that gives new meaning to the expression “total information awareness.” The Patriot Act and Military Commissions Act have given the federal government the tools to monitor just about any U.S. citizen or permanent resident at any time for any reason. Now the U.S. intelligence community is getting into more of the same overseas. The program to collect biographical and personal information on foreigners, particularly government officials and political figures, is in place at more than 30 embassies. Many of these are in so-called “front line” states in the Middle East and Central Asia, and the targets of the operation predictably include individuals from nations like Iran, North Korea, China, Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia. The rationale for collecting e-mail addresses, frequent-flyer accounts, credit-card information, and phone numbers is simple: it is far easier to access private accounts surreptitiously and collect information through them than it is to break into heavily protected government systems at embassies and ministries. The biometric information is of interest to CIA for monitoring the movements of suspected intelligence officers who sometimes travel on documents with false names. Airport security systems now often incorporate biometrics. Many of these systems were installed with the assistance of the U.S. government in the wake of 9/11 and include a “backdoor” that allows the CIA or National Security Agency to collect information on all travelers passing through.



### **The Pentagon’s newly launched cyber-command hacked WikiLeaks’ servers to render the site inoperable.**

The effort was aided by the Israelis, who are highly skilled in government-sponsored intrusion into Internet servers. Meanwhile, senior managers at the Pentagon, CIA, and State Department are discussing requiring all employees with security clearances to sign waivers permitting random checks of personal computers to make sure that they are not bringing work home from the office or viewing sites like WikiLeaks. Several federal agencies have already advised employees that accessing WikiLeaks in any way to review the content either on or off the site will be grounds for disciplinary action—meaning that opening the *New York Times* on Saturday morning can prove to be a dangerous act of subversion. And the word is also out in the academic community. Several major university placement offices have advised graduating seniors that questions relating to WikiLeaks will be part of the security screening process for government jobs at State, the Pentagon, and the intelligence agencies. Viewing WikiLeaks could be regarded as grounds for denial of employment. The Pentagon has gone one step further, warning all employees that receiving any WikiLeaks information from an outside source, even if it is something that has been made public in a newspaper, must be treated as a security violation and reported. If the violation is not reported, and the material is not deleted immediately from one’s computer, disciplinary action will result.

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# Trade Goods, Not People

Conservatives must confront the economics of immigration.

By William W. Chip

WHEN CONSERVATIVE icon Paul Weyrich died in December 2008, the Democrats had just won the White House and increased their majorities in the House and Senate. Virtually from his deathbed, Weyrich judged that conservatism had become a movement “without a serious agenda or a means of explaining such an agenda to the public.”

What would Weyrich have made of the Republican Party’s 2010 comeback? In the contest for power, does having a “serious agenda” really matter? The GOP’s “Pledge to America,” with almost as many photographs as paragraphs, was a pale imitation of New Gingrich’s 1994 “Contract With America,” and it dropped from sight almost as soon as it was released.

Does having a “means of explaining” the conservative agenda really matter? Time and again we watched painfully sincere Tea Party candidates wander into incoherence when asked even the simplest questions about how they would go about “taking back” their country.

For Republicans and the Tea Party, promising to extend the Bush tax cuts, repeal Obamacare, and restrain deficit spending proved to be a winning agenda. But it was hardly a serious one. Obamacare was hated mainly because seniors and others perceived that spending on their own healthcare would be curtailed. What is the conservative plan to reduce the federal deficit without touching Medicare? “Stimulus spending,” a cornucopia of Democratic earmarks, may have produced monster deficits and few jobs, but what other

means does Congress have to counter a recession? Republicans might prefer tax cuts to spending increases, but equivalent tax cuts would have produced equivalent deficits. Moreover, given the determination of American households and businesses to “deleverage,” tax cuts were no more likely than government spending to pump up aggregate demand.

Inscribed on a stone arch over an entry to the Yale Medical School is a Latin phrase that translates roughly as “most of your patients get better no matter what you do to them.” Republican leaders may be betting that, no matter what Congress does in the next two years, the economy will improve, and grateful voters will reward the GOP for sound economic stewardship.

If the Great Recession were only a more severe version of a typical business downturn, these Republican leaders might be proven right. Unfortunately, for them and for the rest of us, when the financial dislocations stemming from the subprime mortgage debacle come to an end, it will become evident that the economic anxieties of ordinary Americans have more intractable causes than improvident home equity loans.

Those causes are mostly rooted in globalization of the economy and the ability and willingness of billions of foreign workers to do the same work that most Americans do, as well as they do it, and for much less compensation. Cutting taxes and government spending may be good things in themselves, but they do not constitute a “serious agenda” for dealing with the threats to

our standard of living posed by the changing balance of global economic power.

In order to pass the Weyrich test, a conservative agenda for addressing the challenge of economic globalization must be both “serious,” in the sense of addressing rather than avoiding the toughest issues, and explicable to the public, even by a politician. I would add an additional test: it must be easy to distinguish from its liberal alternatives.

Globalization is a complex phenomenon, but its origins are not hard to understand. Twentieth-century advances in medical care and food production engendered population explosions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, while comparable advances in transportation and communications, coupled with the decline of socialist ideology, put these billions of otherwise isolated Third World peoples into economic contact with much wealthier First World producers and consumers.

For the United States, globalization commenced in the 1960s and 1970s with a flood of imported manufactures from low-wage Mexican *maquiladoras*. As assembly work migrated to even lower-wage Asian sweatshops in the 1980s and 1990s, the flood of imported manufactures became a tsunami and was accompanied by a deluge of unemployed Mexican immigrants (doing the jobs “Americans won’t do”) and H-1B workers (doing the jobs “Americans can’t do”).

The response of conservative intellectuals to all of this has been divided. Indeed, conflicting attitudes towards

globalization, and particularly immigration, are an important element of the “conservative crack-up” that gave 1960s liberalism a new lease on life. The lack of intellectual consistency within conservative circles on the merits of mass immigration has made it easier for the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and even the *Wall Street Journal* to charge that Republican restrictionism, when it occasionally surfaces, is not a policy at all, but instead an opportunistic concession to redneck nativism.

At the theoretical level, the chief division over the right conservative response to globalization is between the libertarian and paleoconservative tendencies, each of which advocates a seemingly coherent approach to the related issues of trade and migration. Because the entry of foreign goods and foreign workers can be controlled only by government regulation, libertarians are instinctively and consistently inclined to favor both free trade and unrestricted immigration. On the whole, this “open-borders” inclination coincides neatly with the agenda of the GOP’s big business supporters.

Paleocons, in contrast, are instinctively and consistently inclined to bar Chinese manufactures and Mexican workers alike. They are proud to be called “protectionists,” believing that their country and its culture need and deserve to be protected. This inclination resonates with the GOP rank and file, who are dismayed by lawless borders.

As it happens, each side is half-right. Libertarians make a compelling case for free trade in goods, while paleoconservatives make an equally compelling case for minimizing immigration. While true believers of either tendency will never accept that, I believe that most conservatives can be persuaded that the case for opening the borders to trade in goods is entirely consistent with the case for closing them to migrant workers.

For conservatives, the appeal of the libertarian case is its apparent consistency with free-market economics. In a free market, a foreign worker, or the product that he makes, is imported only because there is no more valuable use for the consumer’s money or for the foreign worker’s labor. Erecting an artificial barrier to the entry of a foreign product or a foreign worker means that both the consumer’s money and the worker’s labor will be put to a less valuable use, reducing the efficiency of the economy and its power to satisfy human wants. This is the classic defense of free trade in goods and labor.

In the real world, the classic defense of free trade is mostly right in the case of products, but mostly wrong in the case of labor. The many arguments that support this conclusion can be boiled down to three: *reciprocity*, *equity*, and *externalities*.

### Reciprocity

The easiest of these to explain is reciprocity. The theory that free markets increase wealth for everybody presupposes that all participants in the marketplace play by free-market rules. If one country freely accepts imports from another, while another taxes imports, overall demand will shift in favor of the taxing country’s products, raising the incomes of their producers. Although the import restriction makes the global economy less efficient, the reduction in total global output falls mostly on the shoulders of the free-trading country; the restrictive country is actually better off. For this reason, free-enterprise advocates have always recognized that their case depends on securing reciprocity in the form of trade agreements that open a country’s markets only to countries that accept its exports.

Following World War II, successive U.S. governments led the way in constructing a global network of bilateral and

multilateral free-trade agreements. Under these agreements, an American worker who faces indirect competition from foreign laborers who make imported products has a parallel opportunity to compete with them by making products for export to their countries. While compliance with these free-trade agreements is imperfect, millions of Americans are in fact employed by industries that depend on exports for their prosperity, such as agriculture, entertainment, and aircraft manufacture.

Yet while almost all countries have bound themselves through free-trade agreements to admit at least some foreign products, none has bound itself to accept economic migrants from other countries. In fact, the principle that every nation has unfettered control over its own immigration policies is as universally entrenched as the principle that goods should be freely traded. Most countries, without apology, accept very few immigrants and reserve their domestic labor markets for native-born workers.

The U.S. government, by adopting a unilateral policy of admitting more than a million legal and illegal workers every year, has effectively increased global demand for foreign-born workers while shifting demand away from American-born workers. An American worker who is forced to compete in the U.S. labor market with an Indian programmer or a Mexican carpenter has no comparable rights to sell his labor outside the United States, let alone to impose claims on the social-welfare systems of other countries.

Economists argue convincingly that, in the very long run, economies will adjust to an increased supply of labor and that immigration need not lead to unemployment for native workers. Unfortunately, Americans mostly live in the short run, and most economists are predicting that the extraordinarily high rate of unemployment reached during the Great Recession is likely to last long

after the economy has in other senses recovered. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, in the year since the recession officially ended, “foreign-born workers gained 656,000 jobs while native-born workers lost 1.2 million.”

## Equity

This absence of reciprocity in global labor markets contributes to an absence of equity in U.S. immigration policy. Free-trade advocates readily admit that importing cheap foreign products may lower the wages of domestic workers who make the same products, but they point out that those same workers benefit as consumers. There is truth in this argument, as is apparent from a visit to any Wal-Mart, where one finds Americans of modest incomes buying necessities and even luxuries at prices that are almost ridiculously low.

But while imported products may benefit working-class consumers as much as they benefit affluent consumers, the benefits of imported labor overwhelmingly accrue to the wealthy because the wealthy spend a much greater share of their incomes on services. The upper-middle-class professional in his suburban tract mansion will have gardeners and nannies galore, but the working stiff who labor at his office, if they have any grass at all, must cut it themselves and rely on relatives and public facilities for pre-school day care.

Should the working stiff aspire to raise his standard of living by operating a cab, taking up nursing, or learning one of the building trades, he is out of luck unless he is willing to accept wages that are acceptable to the most recently arrived migrant worker. The affluent Americans who are chauffeured by taxi drivers from Somalia and the Punjab, whose elderly parents are cared for by nurses from Jamaica and the Philippines, and who lounge on decks constructed by carpenters from El Salvador

and Mexico, have declared these to be “jobs that Americans won’t do.”

There are certainly some jobs that are so dangerous or degrading that Americans won’t do them unless you pay them a lot of money. Yet while no job is more dangerous than coal mining, that industry has managed to survive and even to thrive with an overwhelmingly native workforce. While no job is more degrading than collecting other people’s garbage, garbage in the District of Columbia, where I reside, is collected by a mostly African-American workforce. The reason Americans are mining coal in Appalachia and collecting garbage in Washington, D.C., is that the pay is high enough to cover food and rent, their families receive health insurance, and after a lifetime of digging coal or collecting garbage, they can retire with modest pensions and a shred of dignity.

One of the great ironies of modern American politics is that, for decades, pious liberals such as the late Sen. Edward Kennedy, without shame or censure, stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the country’s most unscrupulous employers of undocumented workers, providing a sheen of political correctness to the ugly spectacle of pitting our least advantaged fellow citizens against a flood of desperate foreign workers. A true conservative—including one who wanted to win elections—would say to their faces: “Unlike you, I am more than willing to pay a few extra bucks for lettuce and landscaping if that means that the people who are born here, and have nowhere else to go, have a fair chance to earn a decent living.”

## Externalities

But put aside equity and assume that conservatives are as hard-hearted and subservient to the rich as liberals would like to believe. If liberal immigration policies are beneficial to America’s professional and business elites, who use

the services of immigrant workers, while harmful to less educated American workers who compete with the immigrants, that’s just the way the cookie crumbles. Before concluding that this hard-hearted calculus makes immigration a good deal for the well-to-do, however, we must account for externalities—the costs of an economic transaction that fall on persons other than the parties to the transaction.

When a product is imported, the U.S. consumer must pay enough to cover the associated labor costs. In most developing countries, these costs may not include healthcare, education, and other social benefits and, even when they do, they are a pittance compared to the costs of American social services. When the worker himself is imported, the equation changes dramatically. While some conservatives, libertarians in particular, would eliminate social benefits for everyone, the overwhelming majority of Americans favor a sturdy “safety net” for citizens, and they won’t deny healthcare and childhood education to anybody, even illegal aliens.

These social costs, which are borne by foreign governments in the case of imported products, but are borne by U.S. taxpayers in the case of imported workers, are the externality that ultimately breaks the back of libertarian arguments in favor of current immigration policies. In 1997 the bipartisan U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform asked the National Research Council to perform what remains the most comprehensive analysis of the economic consequences of immigration. The 1997 report concluded that any net benefit to Americans from immigration was outweighed by the cost of providing social services to the immigrants and their families. Given the enormous increase in the immigrant population since then, and the soaring cost of the benefits themselves, the negative externalities of cur-



rent immigration policies must be immensely greater today.

How could it be otherwise, given the nature of recent immigration policies? Prior to 1965 most immigrants needed to be sponsored by an employer and were, on average, better educated and less likely to be poor than native-born Americans. After 1965 the overwhelming majority of immigrants have been admitted on the basis of being related to a previous immigrant, as a result of which the source of most immigration has shifted from about a dozen European countries to about a dozen developing countries where very large families are still the norm and almost everyone can dramatically raise his standard of living by moving to the United States. As a result, new immigrants tend on average to be less educated and more likely to live in poverty than native-born Americans. Not surprisingly, illegal immigrants, settling in almost equal numbers, are even less educated and more poverty-prone.

The category of externalities is not exhausted by the costs of government benefits. The wealth of a nation is not solely a function of the education and enterprise of its people. Some people are born with extraordinary talent that makes them valuable under all circumstances, but most folks depend for their success on learning some basic skills and then harnessing their labor to other productive resources that are either natural (e.g., farms and mines) or man-made (e.g., factories and railroads). American workers have traditionally enjoyed one of the world's highest standards of living because the country was well endowed with arable land and other natural resources and because we had a long head start over most of the world in building transportation infrastructure, energy grids, and manufacturing capacity.

Unfortunately, the number of well-paid jobs exploiting natural resources is lim-

ited by the quantity of those resources, which in the United States has been dwindling, in part because they were so intensely exploited during our industrial expansion. Although factories and other man-made resources are not limited by nature, the forces of global supply and demand limit the number of factories that can profitably be situated in the United States. For an increasing array of products, such as clothing and toys, which can be made using routine technology, it is simply no longer feasible, absent massive government subsidy, to locate a factory in the United States.

As America's stock of natural resources and globally competitive factories continues to shrink on account of depletion and global competition, the portion of the U.S. population that can rely on that asset base to boost their own productivity is bound to shrink. More Americans will have to make their living providing services to the shrinking segment of the population that is able to find employment in globally competitive enterprises. Immigration effectively swells the supply of labor in a market where demand for their labor is in secular decline.

### **A Conservative Agenda**

From the standpoint of principle, a restrictionist agenda would be wholly consistent with such conservative ideals as husbandry of natural resources, preservation of cultural heritage, and containment of the welfare state. It passes the Weyrich tests of seriousness and explicability to the public. Who, after all, will not understand why we should stop importing foreign labor in the face of 9.7 percent unemployment?

A restrictionist immigration policy also passes the test of being easily distinguished from the liberal alternative. In fact, from the standpoint of political expedience, a division between the parties over immigration policy would be a gift to the conservative cause since lib-

eral Democrats are forced by ideology and parts of their base to advocate immigration policies that are as unpopular as they are irrational. As Weyrich would say, theirs is not a "serious agenda." If they dared explain their immigration program to the public, they would be tarred and feathered.

If a common-sense economy is one in which there is relatively free trade in goods and relatively strict control of immigration, Pelosi-style liberals want the opposite. Their solution to the challenge of globalization is an economy in which foreign imports are restricted and immigrant workers are welcomed. They fantasize that American manufacturers can be induced or forced to produce here rather than abroad, creating employment for those born here and an unlimited number of positions for those born elsewhere, too. Of course, if an American company attempts to produce here what can be produced more cheaply in Ireland, a German company will make the product in Ireland, ship it to the United States, and put the American company out of business—and its employees out of work. Punishing U.S. companies when they move jobs overseas only works if the government is also prepared to abrogate our global network of free-trade agreements.

Out of loyalty to their ethnic lobbies and from reflexive political correctness, the leaders of the Democratic Party are manacled to immigration policies that contradict every one of the promises that gave them control of Congress in 2006 and control of the White House in 2008. Energy independence and reducing the carbon footprint? Census Bureau data indicate that by 2050 the U.S. population will have grown from 300 million to nearly 470 million, mainly due to immigration. During that period the average American consumer will have to reduce his energy consumption by more than one third just to maintain the

nation's current level of energy utilization. Who realistically believes that the electorate will countenance the more draconian cuts needed to produce a reduction in the U.S. carbon footprint?

Rebuilding our "crumbling infrastructure"? The Eisenhower administration, when the population was only 180 million, had the wisdom to overbuild our transportation system to accommodate 200 million Americans. That infrastructure is not just crumbling; it is collapsing under the weight of 300 million inhabitants, a number that is mostly a result of immigration policies enacted without thought to their long-term consequences. As the population surges towards 500 million—and it will grow even faster if the Obama administration enacts comprehensive immigration reform—the agony of today's overcrowded highways and congested airports will become a nightmare.

According to the liberal caricature, the categorical imperative of conservative economic policy is to liberate able and ambitious citizens to enrich themselves. But while conservatives defend the freedom to accumulate wealth, authentic conservatives are equally interested in fostering a society in which every citizen who is able and willing to attend school and work hard can raise himself above poverty, form a family, and retire in dignity. Conservatives love the American dream.

Conservatives also love republican democracy, and the exceptional economic opportunities that constitute the American dream account in great part for the exceptional success of the country's form of government. The Founding Fathers had no doubt that the presence of an economically independent class of farmers and artisans was an important reason why republican democracy could flourish in America more easily than in Europe, where the average citizen was a landless peasant dependent

on the good will of an aristocratic landlord. Even today, worrying that overdependence on government largesse can degrade the citizenry remains a distinguishing concern of conservative political theory.

Conservatives can live comfortably with immigration policies that allow Americans who marry abroad to bring home their spouses, that provide temporary asylum to bona fide refugees, and that admit some of the world's best scientists, athletes, and artists to enrich our society. That is all the immigration that most voters would regard as essential to their own interests and principles.

The present policy of immigration for the sake of immigration has nothing conservative or popular about it. It survives on autopilot because the mainstream media cannot take the time to understand it, because the least innovative segments of the business community profit from it, and because liberals cannot resist the opportunity to call someone else a racist. Conservatives, by adopting "trade goods, not people" as their economic agenda, can do a service to themselves and to their country. ■

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## Going for Gold (Again)

Could a return to hard money save the dollar?

**By Robert P. Murphy**

CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERTARIANS often lament President Franklin Roosevelt's decision in 1933 to confiscate Americans' monetary gold, a move that killed the classical gold standard. In 1971, Richard Nixon abolished even the diluted gold exchange standard of Bretton Woods and totally severed the dollar's tie to the precious metal. The world economy has since rested on a foundation of fiat paper money.

What, if anything, have we lost as a result? And could we return to the golden age even if we wanted to?

The supreme virtue of the gold standard was that it restrained the power of the government to debase the currency. Before FDR's 1933 order, the U.S. was obligated to redeem paper dollars for physical gold. In other words, the dollar was pegged to gold at a fixed rate.

In practice, this put a serious constraint on those who controlled the U.S.

printing presses. Other things being equal, if the government—or the Federal Reserve, after 1913—printed more currency, the prices of goods and services quoted in dollars went up. On the other hand, with a fixed number of dollars in existence, there would be a tendency for the prices of goods and services to fall gently in a healthy economy that produced more output over time. As a loose rule of thumb, on a strict gold standard the Fed could only print more dollars as miners brought more physical gold to the surface.

The gold standard offered automatic feedback to restrain excessive inflation of the money supply. If Fed officials started running the printing presses too heavily—flooding the world with new dollars—this would put upward pressure on the market price of gold. If, say, gold began trading at \$21.67 per ounce in the open market, and the officially

pegged price of gold was \$20.67, speculators would short the dollar. They would redeem dollars for gold, then they would sell that gold on the world market, and reap profits of \$1 per ounce.

With speculators “attacking” the dollar in this fashion, government gold reserves would soon be depleted, as the Fed effectively had to buy back the excess dollars from speculators. In order to reassure investors that the dollar was still as good as gold, the Fed would be compelled to stop printing money and wait for the dollar to strengthen against the metal before attempting any more inflationary policies.

The gold standard was not perfect. It allowed the Fed to foster a massive asset bubble in the late 1920s, which ushered in the Great Depression as Herbert Hoover foolishly implemented a New Deal-lite to combat the financial crash. Even so, the gold standard prevented runaway inflation of the kind that destroyed interwar Germany and, in our times, Zimbabwe. By providing a solid anchor for the paper currency, the gold standard gave investors, firms, and households confidence in the long-run purchasing power of their monetary unit.

Ludwig von Mises went so far as to liken the gold standard to a bill of rights or constitution. In his view, it prevented the government from diluting the value of the currency to achieve its spending objectives.

Practically speaking, it would be straightforward to put the U.S. back on a gold standard. Fed Chairman Bernanke can do whatever he wants so long as he argues that it will “help the economy.” This includes not only making public proclamations of “quantitative easing,” but also giving behind-the-scenes bailouts worth several trillion dollars to private institutions, including foreign banks.

It would be quite simple for Bernanke to announce at a news conference

something like the following:

Starting on January 2, 2012, the Federal Reserve will stop targeting interest rates. Instead, we will use our open market operations to keep the price of gold within a narrow range centered on \$2,000 per ounce. To convince investors that we will have the ability to maintain the new peg, starting immediately the Fed will begin selling off its mortgage-backed securities and using the proceeds to accumulate gold. Furthermore, we will allow outside auditors to inspect our holdings of gold every 6 months, so the world will have no doubt that we can maintain our commitment to a stable dollar-price of gold.

After the announcement, Bernanke and his colleagues would figure out whether they had chosen a realistic exchange rate. If the gold price went up to, say, \$2,400 per ounce, the Fed would have to remove dollars from the economy, by selling off assets, such as the Fed’s enormous holdings of U.S. government debt—and then, crucially, not buying anything else with the proceeds. This tightening of monetary policy is exactly what the Fed currently does when it wants to hike interest rates. The difference would be that the Fed’s target variable wouldn’t be the federal funds interest rate, but rather the price of gold.

On the other hand, Bernanke might observe that his announcement provided a flood of relief to investors who thought that successive rounds of “quantitative easing” would destroy the dollar. They might sharply reduce their gold holdings and rush back to more conventional assets. This would lead to a fall in the price of gold. In that case, Bernanke could begin writing checks on thin air—just as he currently does—to accumulate more physical gold. He would stop when the price had been

pushed back up to the target of \$2,000.

The chances of Bernanke following this path are nil. But even if he were willing to do so, should he?

Critics often argue that in a financial panic people rush to gold as the safest of assets. With a floating dollar-price of gold, this shows up as skyrocketing prices for goods. But what if the dollar-price of gold had been fixed? Then the worldwide rush into gold would require massive price deflation for everything else, as measured in dollars. Wouldn’t that have been disastrous?

There are three responses to this. First, part of the reason for skyrocketing gold prices has been investor fears that Bernanke will cripple the dollar with his inflationary schemes. If people were convinced that the currency would always be “as good as gold,” there would have been no reason to dump dollar-denominated assets in favor of gold.

Second, Austrian Business Cycle theory indicates that the reason for our financial panic was the credit expansion undertaken by Greenspan, which fueled the housing bubble. Although booms and busts are still possible under a gold standard, they are kept under tighter control.

Third, a market economy can handle falling prices just fine. The depression of 1920-1921 saw a much sharper fall in prices than any one-year stretch of the Great Depression. The difference was that in the early 1930s Herbert Hoover didn’t allow wages to fall, thus making labor artificially expensive. By the same token, the U.S. economy would have recovered from the collapsing stock market and real estate bubbles long ago had the government and Fed stood back and let nature run its course.

The true danger to economies is a printing press run rampant, not the gold standard. ■

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# Empire Is Bad Business

The Pentagon sells out American manufacturing for Japanese bases.

By Eamonn Fingleton

TOKYO — When German executives visit Tokyo, they are often treated to a session at Bernd's Bar, a notably authentic German pub. A bit too authentic, perhaps, given its Axis-era accoutrements. The last time I was there, one of the walls still featured a huge photograph of Willy Messerschmitt in conversation with Charles Lindbergh. It had evidently been taken at a German aerodrome in the late 1930s and a couple of Messerschmitt's eponymous fighter planes—the sort that a few years later were to cause such grief for the British—loomed in the background.

It is all a bit of a joke for the Japanese, who tend to be less embarrassed than their German counterparts about their shared military past. Indeed it is said that proceedings at Bernd's sometimes get so raucous that it is not unknown for a Japanese host to dig a German guest in the ribs and stage-whisper, "Next time without the Italians!"

No doubt no one at Pearl Harbor need lose much sleep over this. But there is still a grain of truth in the joke—and not just because the Japanese and Germans fought better than the Italians in World War II. Whatever pieties may be recited in Washington about America's need to provide—from now until kingdom-come apparently—a massive defense umbrella over an allegedly helpless Japan, the Japanese are more capable than most of coping with any national-security threat the future may hold. So too, for that matter, can the Germans.

Given that more than 20 years have elapsed since the Berlin Wall came down, American budget hawks are understandably wondering why Uncle

Sam needs so many bases, not least in nations as rich and potentially militarily self-sufficient as Japan and Germany. The scale of America's "forward deployments" is hard to exaggerate: as recorded in a recent book by the military scholar Andrew Bacevich, the U.S. continues to deploy fully 300,000 troops in more than 760 bases in 39 foreign countries, not to mention a further 90,000 sailors and marines at sea. More than 40,000 troops and support staff are stationed in Japan alone.

While Washington's reasons for persisting with the Cold War status quo have come in for considerable scrutiny lately, less attention has been paid to why so-called host nations have been so apparently meek in tolerating what amount to occupation armies on their soil. It is a significant oversight, as many host nations harbor private agendas at odds with the American national interest.

I will focus here mainly on Japan. It happens to be the case I know best, and it is also the most relevant. As the late Chalmers Johnson pointed out, few nations seem less in need of U.S. protection than modern Japan. After all, its peace constitution notwithstanding, Japan has long boasted one of the world's most sophisticated military establishments. (The peace constitution has, of course, been honored more in the breach than the observance since as far back as the early 1950s. Its only significance these days is as an excuse for staying out of harm's way when America becomes embroiled in another war.)

Japan moreover is now in key ways more technologically advanced than the

United States. As I have documented in several books and pace all talk of "two lost decades," Japan has leapt far ahead of the United States in countless militarily crucial, if virtually invisible, manufacturing technologies. Examples range from advanced materials such as gallium arsenide and carbon fiber to vital production machines such as the so-called steppers used in the semiconductor industry and the hyper-accurate machine tools needed to make state-of-the-art aircraft. Even in nuclear technology, Japan is no slouch. It has been building its capabilities since as far back as the 1950s and, having bought what remained of the erstwhile world-beating Westinghouse nuclear division some years ago, now ranks as the world leader in nuclear power.

What makes Japan particularly relevant is its finesse in manipulating an often nervous and short-sighted Pentagon for purposes that, to put it politely, serve Japan's interests better than America's. To be sure, in former times even the most significant of host nations, not least Japan, genuinely valued U.S. protection, particularly in staring down Soviet expansionism. But that was a long time ago, and from the late 1950s on it has been apparent—to close observers at least—that a simple wish to bolster their defenses has not necessarily been the main reason, let alone the only one, why the more militarily capable host nations have played along with Washington's imperial illusions.

In most cases there has been an unstated understanding about other matters, particularly economic ones. Indeed,

in a phenomenon that has attracted far less attention than it deserves, many host nations have long viewed the Pentagon as a sort of geopolitical Santa Claus, ever willing to shower favorites with economic goodies.

As Chalmers Johnson argued, the Pentagon has played a decisive role in palliating American anger over mercantilist trade policies in several host nations. By far the greatest beneficiary has been Japan, but if anything the trade policies of South Korea have been even more blatantly at odds with American ideas of fair play. To a lesser extent, key European allies, not least the Germans, have also been allowed to perpetuate policies that render their markets resistant to American exports.

Although for the most part the economic rationale behind host nations' cooperation has remained *sub rosa*, there have been occasions over the years when it has been hard to overlook. It is probably not an accident, for instance, that when war broke out in Korea half a century ago, American policymakers, desperate for bases in Japan, fell over themselves to help Japan crank up its then stalled export engine. Not only did the Pentagon's sourcing program strongly favor Japanese suppliers, but the State Department campaigned vigorously to get European nations to open their markets to Japanese exports. As the economic historian Alfred Eckes has recorded, the United States went so far as to cut tariffs on imports from certain European nations in return for those nations boosting imports from Japan, not from the United States! The State Department moreover worked energetically to overcome European resistance to Japan's wish to join key international bodies such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The Pentagon's need for bases also proved serendipitous for Japan during the Vietnam War. By then the Japanese

economic system had several American industries, most notably the television manufacturing, on the ropes and U.S.-Japan commercial relations were poisoned by numerous charges of Japanese dumping. Nonetheless, bogged down in a war in Indochina and badly in need of logistical support from Japan, the Nixon administration was persuaded to go easy on the Japanese television-set cartel.

"Essentially we gave away our electronics industry in return for Japanese support in Vietnam," says Washington-based trade expert Pat Choate. "In any other country there would have been riots in the streets."

For Japan as well as other host nations, another advantage of cooperating with the Pentagon has been to receive countless officially sanctioned transfers of American technology, not least crucial military technology such as the secrets to build Japan's latest generation of fighter jets. Meanwhile, as Choate points out, the Justice Department has often been persuaded to turn a blind eye to theft of American intellectual property by several host nations.

The bases have also served Japan well in pitching for U.S. defense contracts. Indeed, Washington has come to regard contractors based in many host nations as "honorary Americans"—a position officially acknowledged in the mid-1990s when, under budgetary constraints imposed by the Clinton administration, the Pentagon more or less abandoned its policy of preferring domestic contractors. Cast aside, too, was the traditional idea that the United States should maintain self-sufficiency in fundamental military components, materials, and equipment.

American bases evoke a powerful not-in-my-backyard response almost everywhere. But the full strength of this feeling is well hidden in the case of the Japanese and South Koreans, thanks in part to the extreme politeness and lavish hospitality they confer on foreign big-

wigs. One policymaker who badly misread the tea leaves is William Cohen, who served as Defense Secretary in the Clinton administration. He argued in 1998 that America's bases in Asia and Europe were vital "to shape people's opinions about us in ways that are favorable to us." Host nations' views of the United States are bolstered when "they see our power, they see our professionalism, they see our patriotism, and they say that's a country that [they] want to be with." Cohen added: "You can only do that if you're forward deployed."

Peddling a similarly self-satisfied line, the Clinton administration's assistant secretary of defense Joseph Nye has argued that America's massive bases in East Asia help promote "democratic development." It is a view that is outspokenly scorned by better informed observers. Here, for instance, is how David Vine, a scholar at American University, put it in 2009:

Bases abroad have become a major and unacknowledged 'face' of the United States, frequently damaging the nation's reputation, engendering grievances and anger, and generally creating antagonistic rather than cooperative relationships between the United States and others. Most dangerously, as we have seen in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and as we are seeing in Iraq and Afghanistan, foreign bases create breeding grounds for radicalism, anti-Americanism, and attacks on the United States, reducing, rather than improving, our national security."

Chalmers Johnson made much the same point in *Blowback* a decade ago. He focused in particular on the sexual side of base life, a topic notable for its absence in most Washington discussions of "forward deployment." In the history of foreign occupations, American GIs are undoubtedly better behaved

than most. But prostitution and venereal disease are only the most obvious of several social problems that bases bring in their wake. It is worth remembering that even in the darkest days of World War II the British were sufficiently ambivalent about U.S. bases that they only half-jokingly referred to American GIs as “overpaid, oversexed, and over here.” Just a few bad actors can do enormous damage, and that damage is compounded when top policymakers like Cohen and Nye seem so out of touch.

In Japan, popular discontent over the bases has usually been hushed up. Over the years many rapes and other serious incidents have gone unreported not only by American generals but, for the most part, by Japanese officials. The catalog of Japanese citizens’ grievances goes back to the earliest days after Japan’s surrender in 1945. The point was well documented by Richard Deverall, a correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*. In a little noticed book privately published in 1953, he showed that the reality of the early postwar U.S.-Japan relationship was far from the marriage made in heaven it was portrayed as being by occupation chief Douglas MacArthur.

Deverall, who was later to bequeath his papers to the American Catholic History Research Center in Washington, wrote: “In areas such as Northern Japan and Hokkaido I saw many incidents which made me blush deeply. For example, in Sapporo I saw a cute little Japanese boy shine the shoes of a burly paratrooper. When finished, the kid said ‘Okeh!’ and looked for his fee. The paratrooper carefully leaned over, spat down the boy’s neck, and walked away.”

The full significance of this incident is apparent only when you realize that the child was in all probability a war orphan—even in the near-starving conditions of the late 1940s, a strong taboo existed against boot blacking among the Japanese.

Deverall added: “During 1947-48, I invariably saw GIs chasing Japanese girls, staggering around and teasing Japanese men, or indulging in other infantile pursuits such as jeeping past a car [bus] stop and holding a stick or fist to hit every Japanese en route.”

To be fair, it should be noted that even Deverall acknowledged that for the most part the GIs’ behavior was “not bad.” Exceptional efforts were made on both sides to insulate Japanese citizens from the worst effects of occupation. In a characteristic move instituted within days of surrender, the Japanese authorities, for instance, set up a vast system of quasi-regulated brothels for the Occupation forces. The intention was clearly, among other things, to minimize the risk of the GIs’ sexual demands instigating an outbreak of venereal disease.

Yet despite all efforts to keep a lid on tensions, Deverall reported that just below the surface “a smoldering resentment boiled and bubbled.” One Japanese citizen quoted by Deverall had this to say of the Americans: “Many of us are not impressed with the crime rate, the superiority complex, vulgar speech, racial prejudices, the lynch mobs, etc of your ‘civilized’ country.”

Tensions lessened little in subsequent decades. Nonetheless top Japanese officials ignored popular discontent about the bases. By the same token they kept the Pentagon on tenterhooks about how much longer the basing arrangements would be tolerated. Writing in *The Fragile Blossom* in 1972, Zbigniew Brzezinski reported that Tokyo was on the brink of asking the Americans to leave, and he predicted that by 1975 they would be gone. This proved a false alarm, but it was well calculated to strengthen the Pentagon’s wish to do anything necessary to keep Tokyo on side.

Tokyo’s true position became apparent a few years later when, in an early effort to rein the federal budget deficits, the

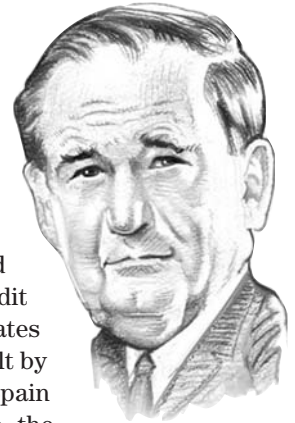
Carter administration toyed with the idea of pulling out of Korea. Tokyo’s response was to institute the so-called *omoiyari yosan*—the “sympathy budget”—under which it has ever afterwards picked up a significant portion of the cost of the Pentagon’s Japanese bases. This helped head off the risk of American pullout. It should be noted, however, that Tokyo’s subventions fall far short of covering the total cost even of the Japanese bases and does nothing to cover the cost of bases in the Middle East whose main economic purpose is to secure Japan’s oil.

Close observers of Japan, however, sense that the end is now nigh for this strange marriage of convenience. From a Japanese point of view there is little more to be gained from suppressing popular resentment against the bases. After all, Japan no longer much needs the Pentagon’s help in trade diplomacy: the United States has now become so enfeebled that it can no longer retaliate against even the most egregious deviations from fair practices on the part of its trade partners. Moreover, there is little left in America’s technology cupboard that Tokyo covets.

Of course, one question remains: what will happen if and when the Americans withdraw? The answer, at least where East Asia and Europe are concerned, is probably nothing. Certainly, as people like Bacevich and Johnson have argued, the role of our bases in maintaining peace has been grossly exaggerated.

A more pertinent question is how much longer the United States can afford to enfeeble its economy in pursuit of secondary national-security goals. Given that China counts as both America’s greatest perceived great-power threat and its largest creditor, the answer is surely obvious. ■

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# Democracy in Crisis

FOR THOSE WHO have read about or vaguely remember the stolid British tribe of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, and the Blitz, which held out in its “finest hour,” December brought a disgusting sight.

Mobs in Parliament Square set fire to the statue of 19th-century statesman Lord Palmerston and urinated on the statue of Winston Churchill. Charlie Gilmour, son of Pink Floyd guitarist David Gilmour, was swinging by a rope from the Cenotaph that memorializes the 700,000 British dead of the Great War.

At night, hundreds of these anarchists peeled off to appear on Regent Street as the Rolls-Royce carrying the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall, Camilla Parker-Bowles, entered. The Rolls was pounded with boots, bottles, sticks, fists and paintballs, as the mob howled “Tory scum!” and “Off with their heads!” A sign was pushed through an open window into Camilla’s side. So precarious was the situation Charles’s security detail was close to drawing guns to protect the first in line to the throne.

What was the mob protesting? Tuition increases for students who pay less for college than the parents of American students. In Parliament, the ruling coalition’s 83-vote margin, after defections, was cut by three-fourths on the vote to raise the tuition fees.

And Europe is only at the beginning of this age of austerity.

Across the Irish Sea, the 50,000 protesters have departed from the General Post Office where the Rising of 1916 took place. But the government’s budget to meet the demands of the European Union for a bailout of Ireland passed in the Dail by just five votes, 82-77.

This is “the budget of a puppet government ... doing what they have been told to do by the IMF, the EU Commis-

sion and the European Central Bank,” said Michael Noonan, the probable finance minister in a new government after coming elections. Noonan said Dublin’s letters to the IMF and European Central Bank read as though the government had been “waterboarded” into signing them.

Irish rage at having to suffer to save Europe’s bondholders of Irish banks, the anarchy in England, riots in France to protest a rise in the retirement age to 62, the violence that wracked Greece, the precarious condition of Portugal and Spain, the anger of Germans at having to bail out their profligate EU partners—raises the question: Can Europe’s welfare states be downsized without violence surging, governments falling, and populists coming to power who will default on debts rather than force the masses that elected them to suffer to save the bank investors?

Can European democracy deal with the gathering storm?

Is not a national default and a collapse of banks across Europe inevitable? And could such a collapse be contained in Europe when America’s big banks are all transnational institutions?

And America is not without her own crises. *The New York Times* reported on affluent Nassau County on Long Island: “Now, with its bonds suddenly downgraded and a state oversight agency preparing to seize its checkbook and credit cards, Nassau is on the verge of a full-fledged fiscal crisis.”

California, Illinois, New Jersey and New York are facing historic deficits, as the stimulus money that enabled them to survive 2009 and 2010 runs out. Illinois is facing a shortfall of \$15 billion, a third of the state budget. California is being compared to Spain. A default by

either could do to the credit rating of states what a default by Italy or Spain would do to the European Monetary Union.

Now the U.S. government is moving again in a direction opposite of where the people voted to go on Nov. 2. The deficit is not shrinking, but growing. Even before the Barack Obama tax compromise—price tag \$857 billion—the 2011 deficit is surging.

In November alone, the U.S. government spent \$150.4 billion more than it took in. For the first two months of FY 2011, which began Oct. 1, the feds spent \$585.7 billion and took in \$294.9 billion, a deficit for just one-sixth of the fiscal year of \$290.8 billion.

Spending is approaching 200 percent of revenue. Obama’s deficit for the first quarter of 2011 alone will be the same size as the largest annual deficit George W. Bush ran. Michael Fereli of JPMorgan Chase projects the 2011 deficit at \$1.5 trillion, after \$1.4 trillion in 2009 and \$1.3 trillion in 2010.

And the bond markets are flashing warning signals. After Obama’s tax deal was announced, U.S. government bond prices tanked. Some folks are getting out to get into stocks. Others think U.S. bonds just became a riskier investment.

U.S. cities, states, and the federal government, as well as the governments of Europe, are facing a crisis of confidence. Can their elected politicians reassure investors who bought their bonds in good faith that those bonds are still worth what they cost? Or should bondholders bail out before they are burned?

We may be entering a crisis of democratic capitalism. ■



# American Burke

Irving Babbitt formulated a conservatism for a world in whirl.

By J. David Hoeveler

FOR CONSERVATIVE THINKERS the past 15 years have been a season of self-assessment. In moods of disenchantment, anger, and even betrayal many have staked out positions differentiating their views from what today commonly passes for “conservatism.” In 2004 Patrick J. Buchanan published *Where the Right Went Wrong*, a work that, like much of this literature, targeted neoconservatism—his subtitle was “How Neoconservatives Subverted the Reagan Revolution and Hijacked the Bush Presidency.” In 2003 Claes Ryn’s *America the Virtuous* indicted the radical conservatives of recent decades and judged them to be the “New Jacobins.”

The most helpful contributors to conservative self-examination have also explored an intellectual genealogy. At the same time that they have condemned a wayward and dangerous Right, they have also looked for roots. They have sought to measure the ascendant “conservatism” they disparage in the light of an older conservatism. That investigation has led in many cases back to Edmund Burke. Long venerated by conservatives in Europe and the United States, the 18th-century Irish-English statesman, critic of the French Revolution and defender of the American, has acquired a new currency in the conservative press. Evidence abounds. David Brooks spoke for many in 2007 when he declared, “Modern conservatism begins with Edmund Burke.”

Yet Burkean conservatism has never sat easily with the conditions of American life. Whereas Europe provided con-

servatism with history and tradition, the United States emerged as a “nation without a past.” That overstates things, but the quest for roots, stability, continuity, and tradition has never been simple here. Our inherited ideology and normative American values embrace individualism and freedom, democracy and equality, flux and change, mobility and relocation. We have never looked to church and seldom to state for a location of authority or for a sense of nationhood. In short, all the fixtures of an idealized organic society, so important to European conservatism, have found barren soil here.

But the interest remains. And no one made the effort to describe an American Burkean conservatism more energetically than Irving Babbitt. A fresh look at this conservative humanist might assist those who look for a Burkean corrective to today’s ascendant Right.

## Conservative Humanist

Babbitt was born in Dayton, Ohio in 1865. He traveled widely in Europe as a young man and became especially attracted to Spain, at a time when many Americans viewed that country with opprobrium. Babbitt matriculated from Harvard College in 1889 and returned there for graduate work in 1892. He kept his ties to Harvard the rest of his life, beginning his teaching career in 1894 when he joined the Romance Languages Department. His scholarship focused on literary criticism, with excursions into other subjects—especially higher education, politics, and religion. His major works include *Literature and the American College* (1908),

*The New Laoköon* (1910), *The Masters of Modern French Criticism* (1912), *Rousseau and Romanticism* (1919), and *Democracy and Leadership* (1924).

His work came to be identified with a school of thought called the “New Humanism.” As defined by Babbitt and Princeton critic Paul Elmer More, this movement in criticism gained popularity in the late 1920s, culminating with a manifesto, *Humanism and America*, in 1930. Babbitt was a legendary teacher at Harvard, dazzling students with the wisdom of the world. Those who sat in his classroom included Van Wyck Brooks, Walter Lippmann, and T.S. Eliot, who called Babbitt and More “the two wisest men that I have known.” Those who have since claimed his mantle include Peter Viereck, Russell Kirk, and George Will.

Babbitt had a quarrel with modern intellectual life and culture. Convinced that the West had lost the sense of sin and misplaced the source of evil, he urged their recovery. All of his views derived from his understanding of human nature. He described two warring principles in human beings: an expansive impulse that seeks liberation from all constraints and a controlling force that exercises discipline and restraint, what Babbitt called the “inner check.” We have thus a “higher” and a “lower” self, always in contention for mastery of the individual.

Babbitt’s writings scour the range of literature and philosophy from the Greeks onward in search of a moral center that could supply the stabilizing effects of the higher self. But he wrote

during what seemed to be the age of the lower self, a defined by the barbarizing currents of romanticism and naturalism. Those ideologies had discredited universal standards, loosened culture and society from their moorings, and bequeathed to us a world where “whirl is king.” Now, said Babbitt, “the central problem for modern man is how to live in a universe with the lid off.”

Romanticism, especially in the fashion of Babbitt's *bête noir*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, posits an innocent human nature—“born free and everywhere in chains”—and accuses society of creating the misery that afflicts us all. Naturalism, in contrast, depicts man as the reflex agent of external forces, biologi-

cal or environmental, that overdetermine his behavior. Both views violate human duality and thus relocate the problem of evil away from an innocent human nature. These reinforcing ideologies, Babbitt believed, had deprived modern man of any inner check. Bereft of the constraining forces of a genuine humanism, he had built a civilization at once emotionally indulgent and mechanically driven.

## THE CULT OF NATIONHOOD, BABBITT BELIEVED, TRANSLATES INTO EXPANSION, AGGRESSION, AND IMPERIALISM.

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Babbitt's life mostly reflects the work of a cultural critic. But that criticism and his frequent forays into the political scene contributed significantly to the development of American conservatism. For years he battled social reformers, utopians, controlling humanitarians, and all manner of collectivists. His followers embraced Babbitt's humanism as the corrective to a leftist progressivism. So it is an arresting thought that in the United States today Babbitt might see the most serious threats to his humanism coming from many who proclaim so vociferously

### Imperialist Conservatism

the cause of “conservatism.” We might see why this is so by looking at four prevailing strands of conservatism: “imperialist” conservatism, “populist” conservatism, “libertarian” (or “anti-statist”) conservatism, and “religious” conservatism.

Babbitt wished to impose on states the same standards of behavior that he prescribed for individuals. Nations, too, must identify and exercise their higher selves; they must relate their ideals and traditions to an ethical center that functions in a restraining manner and act accordingly in their dealings with the rest of the world. For nations as well as

individuals can easily succumb to romantic habits of egoism and innocence, reinforced all the more dangerously by naturalism's worship of material power. They lapse into self-flattery; they search for and celebrate the attributes that mark their historical, cultural, or racial distinctiveness.

The cult of nationhood, Babbitt believed, translates into expansion, aggression, and imperialism. He judged nationalism “the most dangerous of all the sham religions of the modern age.” Under nationalism, the building blocks of a proper conservatism—the vital traditions by which individuals find their higher selves—become detached from their location within a common humanity and leave only chauvinism. There follows inevitably, he believed, an imperialist outreach. But a just state, Babbitt wrote, will always “mind its own business.” It will serve the world not by its commercial ambitions or by the imposition of its ideals but, in the manner of all

true leadership, by its example.

Babbitt saw America failing this test, and he recoiled from Woodrow Wilson's “hypocritical intervention” in Mexico in 1916 and his conduct in World War I. “More than any other recent American,” Babbitt asserted, Wilson has “sought to extend our idealism beyond our national frontiers.” Wilson's “humanitarian crusading” served mostly, Babbitt believed, to mask American will to power and the commercial expansion that attended it.

Commentators left and right have seen a neo-Wilsonian tilt in recent American foreign policy. Gary Dorrien in his book *Imperial Designs: Neoconservatism and the New Pax Americana* supplies documentation aplenty to illustrate this turn. Babbitt would have no trouble recognizing the rhetoric of democratic idealism that often accompanied expressions of America's interventionist. Charles Krauthammer took to the pages of the *New Republic* in 1991 to urge that the United States lead a unipolar globe, “unabashedly laying down the rules of world order and being prepared to enforce them.” Some neoconservatives, like Joshua Muravchik, directly linked Ronald Reagan to Woodrow Wilson and had high praise for “the global trend of democratization” they both promoted. American intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan provided occasion for these sentiments, and the Project for the New American Century the *Weekly Standard* advanced them forcefully.

On the other hand, conservative critics of American interventionism, like Irving Babbitt before them, often made their case along Burkean lines. Pat Buchanan thus saw in the neoconservative prescriptions a source of endless trouble. We would be interfering, he said, “in the affairs of other nations whose institutions are shaped by their own history, culture, traditions and values, not ours.” This foreign policy, he insisted, wasn't conservatism at all.

Claes Ryn made that point emphatically and quoted from Babbitt's *Democracy and Leadership* in doing so.

## Populist Conservatism

For a long time populism was overwhelmingly associated with the Left—consider William Jennings Bryan, Robert La Follette, Huey Long, Charles Coughlin, Henry Wallace. But with Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s populism took on rightist causes. Since then we have seen Barry Goldwater, George Wallace, and now Sarah Palin.

Populist politics is always anti-elitist. It always exposes the well-placed and privileged insiders whose access to power and influence makes victims of the masses of ordinary Americans. McCarthy pointed his accusing finger at the Ivy Leaguers who ran the State Department. George Wallace mocked country-club socialites, bureaucrats, and the federal judges whose desegregation decrees trumped the preferences of local residents. In turn, neo-conservatives in the 1970s and 1980s found their bogeyman in the “New Class”—academia, the media, the unelected judiciary, the entrenched Washington bureaucracy.

Ronald Reagan liked to explain why he switched from the Democrats to the Republicans. He asserted that “the intellectual and political leadership of the Democratic Party changed. The party was taken over by elitists who believed only they could plan properly the lives of the people.” Reagan had a point, to be sure. But when the future president at the same time spoke for ordinary Americans—“the ones who fight the wars; drive the trucks and raise the kids; the farmer and the fireman, craftsmen, and cop”—he employed a rhetorical strategy heretofore mostly associated with the Left. Republicans had learned, however, that the surest way to discredit an opponent was to label him “elitist.”

Irving Babbitt looked at democracy with thorough skepticism. He located in it the expansionist tendencies of society's lower self, dangerously fueled by romanticism's notions of innocence—its faith in natural man and an uncorrupted “people”—and naturalism's hedonistic drive. Every social system must find a principle of self-control, Babbitt insisted, and democracy has the least capacity to provide it. The notion that wisdom somehow lies in the intuitive sense of the majority at any time, Babbitt wrote, “should be the most completely exploded of all fallacies.”

He would find familiar the populist and demagogic rhetoric that characterizes so much conservative political speech today—but he would not have expected it to come from conservatives. In his own time he decried the drift toward what he called a democracy “of the radical type,” represented by reforms that implemented the referendum, the recall, the initiative, and the direct election of senators. All signified to Babbitt an underlying faith in the democratic will. Babbitt saw in this “plebiscite democracy” only concession to the shifting emotions of the crowd.

Babbitt did not abandon democracy, however, nor did he endorse any substitute for it. His colleague More wrote against the familiar refrain that the cure for democracy is more democracy. The cure for democracy, More insisted, “is *better* democracy.” Babbitt agreed. He titled a chapter in one book “Democracy and Standards.” Repeatedly he cited the necessity for critical judgment and distinctions in all things. Leadership, he argued, should fall to individuals who have won the battle of their own souls, who exercise the inner check, who find themselves at home in the higher tradition that counterbalances the sentiment of the moment and the emotion of the hour.

Democracy, Babbitt always urged, does not need the natural person; it needs the improved individual. In the end, he believed, only one thing can save democracy—the “aristocratic principle.” His words anticipate the lines from Peter Viereck, author of *Conservatism Revisited* in 1949. “Democracy,” Viereck wrote, “is the best government on earth when it tries to make all its citizens aristocrats.”

## Libertarian Conservatism

The airwaves today reverberate with anti-government animus. “Tea Party” protests denounce national healthcare and other massive federal programs. These conservatives venerate Reagan's maxim that “Government is not a solution to our problem; government is the problem.” Indeed, modern conservatism has effected a remarkable amalgam: a populism that is for private enterprise and against activist government.

Anti-statist conservatism gains some approval from Babbitt. “I stand for the individual,” he once said. He strongly defended the rights of property. He distrusted the reformer and the humanitarian who look to government to force their agendas on a reluctant populace. Babbitt always warned that those who are most anxious to save us are also most anxious to control us. Babbitt judged the moral crusader, readily equipped with a Rousseauistic “kiss for all mankind,” to be the most intemperate of personalities, ruled by an unyielding emotional expansiveness and authoritarian will.

Here Babbitt was in accord with elitist libertarians like William Graham Sumner, H.L. Mencken, and Albert Jay Nock. He shared their distrust of the crowd's conformist passions: “For he conscience that is felt as a still small voice [of God] we have substituted a social conscience that operates through a megaphone,” he said. He found this impulse all the more threatening when the state became its instrument.

Babbitt did not believe that society could save itself by reform at the bottom. "All reform must start at the top," he prescribed, among the leadership classes. He contended that in a perfect world, where all citizens had secured the inner check, the ideal government would be anarchy. But he had no faith in any such realization. More painfully yet, Babbitt had no faith in America's existing leadership. He saw mostly greed and dishonesty among the wealthy classes and little of the aristocratic principle. He wanted this elite to be models of "moderation and magnanimity." One has no difficulty imagining how Babbitt would judge today's Wall Street.

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His views here may suggest how badly conservatism today needs an effective philosophy of government. He liked to quote Burke: "Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without." With the complexities of today's world, this prescription sounds very abstract. Babbitt tried to evoke a Burkean and Disraelian sense of the state as repository of the national history and tradition; but he had little to say about government and what it should do. Ultimately, he simply opted for liberty, and praised the work of the American Founders "as one of the greatest blessings that has ever been vouchsafed to any people."

### Religious Conservatism

From John Winthrop and the Puritans to Ronald Reagan, religion has helped define America's identity and role in the world as a "shining city upon a hill." It has also inspired reformers, from aboli-

tionists to anti-abortionists. However varying their causes, moralists have wanted to get America right with God.

Babbitt stands apart from all these associations. He considered himself an empiricist and like to say he "would meet the positivists on their own ground." He would appeal to the dual nature of the human personality as a matter of observation. He refused to acknowledge religious dogma or ecclesiastical authority as legitimate. He would defend humanism, "positive and critical," without appeal to anything supernatural.

To be sure, Babbitt did have much respect for religion, which he believed serves best, and most properly, as a form

of spiritual discipline, a corollary of the inner check. Like many conservatives from Burke on, he valued religion and church for their restraining influences. "Christianity," Babbitt wrote, "has actually done much to curb the expansive lusts of the human heart, and, among other lusts, the lust for power."

In his own day, however, Babbitt saw religion reflecting the errant side of modern culture. Much of it, he thought, had fused with an expansive sentimentalism to produce the Social Gospel and an indiscriminate humanitarianism. Babbitt was also sensitive to how readily the human will seizes any universal truth and makes it an appendage of the ego.

Religion, when called into the service of political causes, elicited Babbitt's protest. He accused William Jennings Bryan of making a "mawkish mixture of the things of God and the things of Caesar." He made the same charge against Wilson. Babbitt selected for his disapproval two prominent figures of American liberalism. Today he might

have found the God-language of conservatives just as objectionable. President George W. Bush's disclosure that "God told me to end the tyranny in Iraq" would have seemed repellent to Babbitt.

### Recovering the Right

Irving Babbitt does not by any means supply conservatism with its last word. Nor does Burke or any other thinker. Babbitt represents a kind of highbrow conservatism whose focus yields a record of cultural and intellectual commentary. Others of the type include George Santayana, H.L. Mencken, Ralph Adams Cram, Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, and Russell Kirk. This school is notable for its cultural attainments—but also for its lack of concrete policies. One would like Babbitt to offer a richer social or political application of his ideas. In discussing the justice, for example, he appealed to Aristotelean standards as applicable only to the balance of forces within the individual. Babbitt did not extend the discussion into plausible social considerations—racial justice, for instance.

In the 1960s and 1970s, however, there emerged a new tendency on the American Right that did look to social science in taking the measure of political life. Neo-conservative outlets like *The Public Interest* utilized empirical data that raised profound skepticism about the reform agenda of the "Great Society." A wider review of such first-generation neo-conservative literature might show that much of it reinforces the humanism of Babbitt and other literary conservatives. Such a review might have diminished the strife between "neoconservatism" and "paleo-conservatism," by showing how the best elements of the traditional Right and social-science Right might have much in common. One illustration must suffice.

In 1979 Jeane Kirkpatrick published her influential essay "Dictatorships & Double Standards" in *Commentary*.



## — OLD AND RIGHT —

WHAT MR. JAMES N. WOOD calls the corsair of democracy—that is, the professional mob-master, the merchant of delusions, the pumper-up of popular fears and rages—is still content to work for capitalism, and capitalism knows how to reward him to his taste. He is the eloquent statesman, the patriotic editor, the fount of inspiration, the prancing milch-cow of optimism. He becomes public leader, Governor, Senator, President. His, perhaps, is the best of trades under democracy—but it has its temptations! Let us try to picture a master corsair, thoroughly adept at pulling the mob nose, who suddenly bethought himself of that Pepin the Short who found himself mayor of the palace and made himself King of the Franks. There were lightnings along that horizon in the days of [Theodore] Roosevelt; there were thunder growls when Bryan emerged from the Nebraska steppes. On some great day of fate, as yet unrevealed by the gods, such a professor of the central democratic science may throw off his employers and set up a business for himself.

I incline to think that military disaster will give him his inspiration and his opportunity—that he will take the form, so dear to democracies, of a man on horseback. The chances are bad today simply because the mob is relatively comfortable—because capitalism has been able to give it relative ease and plenty of food in return for its docility. Genuine poverty is very rare in the United States, and actual hardship is almost unknown. There are times when the proletariat is short of phonograph records, silk shirts, and movie tickets, but there are very few times when it is short of nourishment. No American knows what it means to live as millions of Europeans lived during the war and have lived, in some places, since: with the loaves of the baker reduced to half size and no meat at all in the meatshop. But the time may come and it may not be far off. A national military disaster would disorganize all industry in the United States, already sufficiently wasteful and chaotic, and introduce the American people, for the first time in their history, to genuine want—and capital would be unable to relieve them. The day of such disaster will bring the savior foreordained. The slaves will follow him, their eyes fixed ecstatically upon the newest New Jerusalem. Men bred to respond automatically to shibboleths will respond to this worst and most insane one. Bolshevism, said General Foch, is the disease of defeated nations.

However, I do not fear for capitalism. It will weather the storm, and no doubt it will be the stronger for it afterward. The inferior man hates it, but there is too much envy mixed with this hatred, in the land of the theoretically free, for him to want to destroy it utterly, or even to wound it incurably. He struggles against it now, but always wistfully, always with a sneaking respect. On the day of Armageddon he may attempt a more violent onslaught. But in the long run he will be beaten. In the long run the corsairs will sell him out, and hand him over to his enemy.

— H.L. Mencken, “On Being an American,” 1922

Harshly judging the foreign policy of the Carter administration, she maintained that the United States should not be seduced by the liberal-sounding democratic rhetoric of revolutionary movements and should continue to support traditional allies, even if they be counted as authoritarian states. She warned that we should not look to world historical forces moving on the putatively irreversible path of modernization—toward liberal democracy, secular rationalism, material improvement, social equality, etc.—and think ourselves peculiarly situated by history to assist in this movement.

“Decades, if not centuries, are normally required for people to acquire the necessary discipline and habits” to achieve such progress, Kirkpatrick wrote. We ought not “to force complex and unfamiliar political practices on societies lacking the requisite political culture, tradition, and social structure” to mimic our very different history. And we cannot, she insisted, be “the world’s midwife to democracy.” Irving Babbitt would wholly concur. The architects of the Iraq War would not.

Therein lies the problem. Many observers—for instance Sam Tanenhaus in his 2009 book *The Death of Conservatism*—have perceived a dangerous disconnection between today’s Right and its richer intellectual past. Much recent conservative writing possesses a dogmatic quality—a metaphysics of the market-place and the absolutism of “American exceptionalism.” But this mentality does not describe historic conservatism, which could serve to moderate this dogmatism. Conservatives of all people ought not to be detached from their own tradition. It is time to reconnect, and Irving Babbitt would be a good place to start. ■

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# Ghosts of Daniel Shays

Historians have begun trying to explain the Tea Party movement, unfortunately.

In *The Whites of Their Eyes*, the leading example of an effort gone mostly wrong, Harvard professor Jill Lepore places the Tea Party movement's demands for a return to founding principles alongside a description of Revolutionary era slavery. She concludes that the current obsession with a set of Founding Fathers stripped clean of their historical racism reveals "a fantasy of an America before race, without race."

Lepore decides that this fantasy is driven by a psychological yearning for "the remembrance of childhood" as a "bulwark against a divided present." In other words, Tea Partiers are trying to hide in a false past from the complexity of the real present. If you're worried about deficit spending and endless bailouts, you're an infantile racist.

Here's a better explanation: Tea Party populism embodies a longstanding American response to elites who seek nakedly excessive personal advantage through corrupt political influence. A few examples from the Founding era will suggest the pattern.

In the decade before the Revolution, farmers in what is now Vermont faced the loss of their property, granted by New Hampshire's colonial governor, when New York claimed the right to sell title to the same land.

This moneymaking scheme had a distinct social color. As the governor of New York explained, it would be "good policy to lodge large tracts of land in the hands of gentlemen of weight and consideration." Smallholders who lost their property could rent it back from its well-connected new owners.

In response to this assault on land

titles, the "Green Mountain Boys" of the New Hampshire Grants, led by Ethan Allen, lashed out against the government of New York. They put land surveyors on "trial" before panels of farmers and drove away New York militia. Justices of the Peace who recognized New York land claims saw their homes burned to the ground or pulled down by mobs. As the historian Robert Shalhope has written, Allen believed these attacks were fair play in a "violent struggle ... that pitted a small cadre of wealthy gentlemen against an entire community of settled and industrious yeomen and their families."

That's the pattern: small cadres of the politically connected wealthy against communities of the industrious. Today, we call it Wall Street versus Main Street. It's one of our angriest and most persistent conflicts. At its heart is the "producerist" ethic, the belief among people who make things that the value of their effort is drained away by society's extractive classes.

Precisely this kind of fight took place in North Carolina in the years before the Revolution. The War of the Regulation pitted farmers against lawyers and public officials who filled their own pockets with padded tax bills and legal fees. The war led, in 1771, to the Battle of Alamance, with the colonial governor ordering his militia to fire artillery at an army of farmers.

Half a dozen leading Regulators who survived the cannon fire were hanged a short time later. One, James Pugh, was citing a list of charges against his government with a rope around his neck when the governor "kicked the barrel out from under Pugh's feet in midsen-

tence." Men died with their grievances on their lips.

The veterans of the Revolutionary War would later challenge a post-revolutionary order that threatened their own economic security.

Jill Lepore dismisses Shays's Rebellion in a single sentence, describing it as "an armed uprising by farmers from Massachusetts struggling to stay free of debtors' prison." But the historian Leonard Richards has destroyed that old view of the 1780s rebellion, proving that few debtors joined its ranks.

Instead, Richards shows, the rebels were productive and hard-working people, led by the most prominent members of their communities. Shaysites correctly believed that a government dominated by seaboard merchants was extracting cash from western Massachusetts and transferring it to eastern speculators in war debt that had been purchased for pennies on the dollar but was redeemed at face value.

Leonards notes that the participants in Shays's Rebellion didn't call themselves rebels. Instead, they positioned themselves as political regulators who sought to "chasten the governing elite and restore communal order."

Note that one well: an uprising against governing elites was undertaken to restore order.

Pursuing the same elite misdiagnosis as historians, Democratic Party leaders have reached the baffling conclusion that the political threat of Tea Party fury can be meliorated through condescension and facile psychologizing. But the present anger seeks order, and order is its only solution. ■

*Chris Bray served as an infantryman in the peacetime Army.*

# Arts & Letters

## BOOKS

[*The Religious Test: Why We Must Question the Beliefs of Our Leaders*, Damon Linker, Norton, 251 pages]

### Fear of God

By Patrick Allitt

THE UNITED STATES is a very religious country: far more Americans belong to churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques than do their counterparts in the other industrial democracies. It is also a very secular country: Congress and the state governments never try to square legislation with church teachings, and people who want nothing to do with religion are protected by organizations that keep the wall of separation strong and high. All are free to be as religious or as unreligious as they want.

Damon Linker fears two groups that might threaten this highly desirable situation: Christian conservatives and militant atheists. He believes we should be alarmed when members of either side aspire to lead us, and we should try to stop them. Yet despite his striving for symmetry, Linker can't really make the case that America's tiny handful of militant atheists aspire to be leaders. In fact, he can only name about six of them, and two of those—Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins—are Brits. The others are far too marginal and far too irritable ever to attract voters' favorable notice.

So this is really a book about the alleged danger posed by Christian conservatives. There are more of them,

some do want to be leaders, and it's possible to imagine a few awkward moments in public life if they were to rise to the top. Even so, readers need not fear that the republic is in danger.

Despite his overstatement of the threat, Linker is clearly right on the main point. Religion makes imperious demands on those who take it seriously, demands that might well be incompatible with leadership of a liberal society. For example, he describes Amish and Hasidic community life in such a way as to convince the rest of us that we don't want Amish or Hasidic leaders. Then he argues that we don't want Mormon leaders either, which may be more pertinent in light of Mitt Romney's presidential aspirations.

The problem with the Mormons, he says, is that they remain open to new revelations, so we can't even be certain what they'll believe next. In the 19th century they scandalized the rest of America by believing in polygamy. Then in 1890 God disclosed to the Prophet Wilford Woodruff that the era of polygamy should end. This revelation opened the way for Utah to become a state of the Union. In the 20th century Mormons scandalized the rest of America by not believing in racial equality. In 1978 God changed his mind on that point too, which had the effect of desegregating the upper circles of heaven and, here on earth, giving colleges in Utah access to federal funds. What's next? Linker doesn't want us to have Mormon leaders who might suddenly find themselves responding to a new divine imperative while in office.

Then there are Catholics, who did indeed have a long history of intolerance, and who gave the Protestant majority fits for more than two centuries. In the run-up to the 1960 presidential

election, a wide variety of Protestant and agnostic groups feared that if John F. Kennedy won, American policy-making would come under Vatican control. Linker insists that this was a reasonable fear. He gives high praise to Kennedy for a speech to evangelical leaders, made in Houston just before the election. Kennedy was anything but a devout Catholic and reassured his audience that in politics his loyalties would be strictly American and this-worldly. So it proved. When the Supreme Court banned prayer and Bible-reading in schools, JFK declined to condemn the rulings, and he refused to support constitutional amendments to undo them.

Linker doesn't come right out and say it, but what he's getting at is that religion is fine among leaders as long as they don't take it too seriously. His ideal would perhaps be President Eisenhower, a decorous churchgoer who once declared that America's institutions made no sense without "a deeply held religious faith—and I don't care what it is!" Linker argues that we live in a "centerless society," one that does not see itself as endowed with a sacred mission. Different people have different ideas about the meaning of life, and our leaders' job is to preside over conditions in which each group can pursue its own ideas without interfering with the others. If religious zealots were to lead us, he believes, they would soon resort to repression and persecution.

Are Christian militiamen roaming the streets, burning the Constitution, stuffing ballot boxes, attacking agnostics, and holding anti-Jewish mass rallies? If so, there is indeed a crisis of the kind Linker fears. Or is that contingency something you don't have to worry about in your neighborhood? Christian conservatives have been active in various polit-

ical campaigns over the last 40 years, and they have been just as law-abiding as everyone else. They have conformed to the etiquette of secular politics. After 9/11 the vast majority endorsed President George W. Bush in distinguishing between Islamic radicals on the one hand and the preponderance of peace-loving Muslims in America on the other. If Christian conservatives had really been a menacing force, the event might have provoked a rounding up of Muslims comparable to the imprisonment of Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor in 1941. Instead, when Christian activists like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson linked the tragedy to what they saw as the nation's falling away from its religious obligations, they suffered stern rebukes and were forced to recant.

The reality could hardly be more different from Linker's nightmare. One sad and comical spectacle over the last few decades has been creationists' efforts to get their ideas about human origins included in biology textbooks. Thwarted by the courts at every turn, they have had to act, during recurrent lawsuits, as though their sole interest were a scientific one, carefully omitting that they feel strongly about the issue because of their faith. In other words, they have to act as though they are secularists even while advancing a religious position. The most they have achieved is the inclusion of mild little stickers on textbook covers, reminding students that evolution is just a theory. This whole charade demonstrates the strength of the status quo and the weakness of the Christian conservative challenge.

What about the Christian Reconstructionists, a group Linker regards as particularly threatening, and whose graduates, from minuscule Patrick Henry College, aspire to be "an elite core of spiritual shock troops"? Reconstructionists seek to invigorate every aspect of life with the spirit of the gospel, as you might expect from a group of earnest Christians. Dismayed by the secular character of public education, they pioneered the religious home schooling movement. Linker admits that profes-

sional educators' early fears that home schooling would create a generation of socially stunted children proved groundless, but he argues that such children are "civically stunted."

Possibly—but surely no more stunted than the Amish and the Hasidic Jews, whose right to live unmolested in closed communities is one of the triumphs of American pluralism. Besides, even locating Reconstructionists requires a microscope. There just aren't very many of them, and they certainly don't stand in the ranks of the nation's leaders.

On the other hand, there are millions of less systematic evangelicals. What Linker dislikes about them is their emotional excess, which he says was bad enough in the age of the Great Awakening and got much worse with the rise of Pentecostalism. He describes their anti-intellectual style of worship and deplores the fact that their brand of Christianity treats "holy foolishness and childlike innocence as positive goods." He cites the distinguished evangelical scholar Mark Noll's book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, which laments the meager scholarly achievements of evangelicals. He then links evangelicalism to the widespread appeal of populism. That is indeed a powerful force in American politics, but there's no simple correlation between evangelical faith and right-wing populism. Don't forget that the Abolitionists in the 19th century and the leaders of the civil rights movement in the 20th were among the most impassioned evangelical Christians in American history.

Moreover, there is a long tradition in America of religious groups themselves carefully policing the church-state boundary. Baptists were among the most ardent advocates of separation in the first place and have long prided themselves on keeping church and state apart. Christians in public life, meanwhile, understand very well that if they argue for laws relating to abortion, gender roles, or same-sex marriage, they must make their case in language that will persuade citizens who do not share their faith. Most of them honor the prin-

ciple of separation, but even if they don't there's a pragmatic consideration. Politicians are always thinking about re-election. They know their careers depend on not advancing explicitly religious legislation. To do so would bring down a firestorm of criticism on their heads and rob them of all credibility.

We are left with the fact that a pluralistic liberal society like ours needs to be wary of absolutist challengers, and our leaders understand the point perfectly well. Any reader who reaches page 100 of *The Religious Test* and wonders what all the fuss is about will be tempted to ask what's going on in the author's life. The answer is that Linker used to work for Richard John Neuhaus at *First Things*, a journal for religious policy intellectuals. In a controversial 1996 symposium on "The End of Democracy," several *First Things* contributors tiptoed to the brink of declaring the U.S. government illegitimate because of what they described as the Supreme Court's "judicial tyranny." They doubted in print whether it was any longer possible to remain loyal.

Here was one genuine case of religious people arguing that rebellion against the secular state could be justified. Linker thrived at the journal, eventually rising to the position of editor, but he apparently began to disagree with his colleagues' positions on this and other matters—including the Catholic sex scandal and the Iraq War—some time between 2001 and 2005. He then left *First Things* and wrote a scorching denunciation of the journal and the movement it represented, entitled *The Theocons: Secular America Under Siege*. His new book continues the saga of this imaginary siege, and continues Linker's repudiation of his former identity. Despite a wealth of interesting historical details, it is not going to convince any but the most jittery reader that fanatical Christians are about to take over leadership of the United States. ■

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[*To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, James Davison Hunter, Oxford University Press, 368 pages]

## What Shall It Profit a Man?

By Richard Gamble

SOCIOLOGIST James Davison Hunter made his reputation as a public intellectual with a landmark interpretation of the “culture wars” in the early 1990s. Now he takes up the question of what Christian faithfulness ought to look like in 21st-century America. *To Change the World* asks Christians of every variety to reconsider the framework of power and transformation that has shaped their efforts to remake society. He offers nothing less than “a new paradigm of being the church in the late modern world.”

Along the way, Hunter challenges the American church’s assumption that it can redeem the culture from the ground up, one person at a time, with the power of ideas wedded to political activism. Flawed and ineffective, this “hearts and minds” approach—dear to so many celebrity pastors, authors, and “world-view” institutes—misunderstands the way sustainable change happens in society and will never achieve its noble purposes. He lauds contemporary American Christianity’s impulse to fulfill the “creation mandate” by obeying God’s directive to Adam in Eden to subdue the earth and wield dominion over it. Indeed, “to be a Christian,” he writes, “is to be obliged to engage the world, pursuing God’s restorative purposes over all of life, individual and corporate, public and private.” But that divine mandate needs to be combined with a strategy that will actually work.

Hunter’s alternative model of social change foregrounds the role played by institutions, top-down leadership, and

well-financed networks of elites operating at the centers of “cultural production.” He rapidly surveys early Christianity, the conversion of the barbarians, the Carolingian Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation and its “successor movements” of revivalism and social reform in America; these are historical instances of deep social change driven by the conscious effort to create alternative structures, not just by a shift in ideals. Hunter summons Christians to a more comprehensive application of the Great Commission that, while still carrying them into “all the world,” will reach beyond geography to include every institution: the arts, sciences, media, politics, education, entertainment, social welfare, and more. He envisions a culturally engaged church, active in every part of life, bearing witness through its “faithful presence,” and “enacting the shalom of God” to bring wholeness to a broken world.

Someone unfamiliar with this esoteric language about the creation mandate, faithful presence, and the peace of God will have a hard time wrapping his mind around just what kind of church Hunter longs to see. At times, he seems merely to dress up an old-fashioned social gospel and anemic ecumenism in trendy language. It is hard to grasp what his recommendations would amount to

gelical right and left and the neo-Anabaptists, uncovering the bad habits they have in common. American Protestants as a group, and even Catholics, have adopted, among other dubious propositions, a naïve transformationalism, a mythic civil religion that commonly fails to distinguish between Israel and America, a negative posture toward the world that emphasizes what Christianity opposes rather than the gift of grace it offers, and a politicized and power-driven strategy to defeat the enemy, whether that enemy takes the form of secularism, injustice, or the world and its ways. He rightly criticizes Christians for cultivating a “proprietary” attitude toward the American narrative and culture, as if the nation personally belonged to any branch of Christianity or even to Christians in general.

Hunter offers constructive reminders about the shared public space that belongs to all Americans regardless of their faith. This is the kind of “common life” that St. Augustine wrote about in the *City of God*, the secular realm inhabited by Christian and non-Christian alike, united by their common stake in promoting this world’s temporal peace, safety, and prosperity—or “human flourishing,” to use Hunter’s preferred description. Ordinary life in all its vari-

**FAITH IN THE OMNISCIENT STATE IS ONE OF THE “ILLUSIONS” OF HUNTER’S SUBTITLE THAT HE TRIES TO UNMASK.**

if he explained them in ordinary words. But Hunter is an astute observer of American culture and worth listening to. He writes from within the American “we” and addresses himself to an audience of his countrymen in the hopes of moving Christians past allegedly obsolete doctrinal battles and “functionally irrelevant” divisions in Christ’s body. In his view, Christians must make common cause among themselves, with followers of other religions, and with nonbelievers for the sake of a more just society.

Hunter is at his best in cutting across superficial distinctions among the evan-

ety is a legitimate sphere of activity for the Christian to practice his God-given vocation. And the public realm, Hunter cautions, is not the same as politics. Our conception of public life, radically narrowed in recent decades, ought once again to be widened and enriched to include the whole range of intermediary institutions between the individual and the state. Faith in the omniscient state is one of the “illusions” of Hunter’s subtitle that he tries to unmask. Indeed, he warns, “the state cannot . . . provide fully satisfying solutions to the problem of values in our society.”

Much of Hunter's justification for Christian engagement in the world hinges on his belief that Christianity offers unique solutions to these problems. He doesn't picture Christians entering the public sphere simply as human beings and as American citizens, but rather as agents of the creation mandate helping "to make a profound difference in every sphere of life." Although that vision sounds pretty ambitious, he insists more than once that the goal of Christian activism ought not to be to transform the world. Yet underneath the whole book pulses Hunter's unmistakable desire for the church to be busy in worldly affairs, to move beyond Word and Sacrament for the sake of Word and Deed. He insists that a "faithful presence" is the Christian's calling "*irrespective of influence*" (his italics). But by mobilizing the gospel to penetrate into "all realms of life," his goal still seems to be to change the world.

In his enthusiasm for Christianity's ameliorative influence in the world, Hunter forgets what we might call the "dark side" of the gospel. Jesus rebuked his disciples for thinking he had come to bring peace—an odd claim on the face of it since the angels had announced peace on earth at his birth. He told his followers that he had come not to bring peace but a sword, one that would divide family members from each other. A robust "theology of the cross"—to borrow the vocabulary of Lutherans, who, along with other confessional, creedal Christians are nearly absent from this book—knows that the gospel reconciles God to man but that it doesn't necessarily reconcile man to man. Fidelity to Christ can set brother against brother, husband against wife, neighbor against neighbor, and citizen against the state. To be sure, a divided world isn't proof of a godly church, but neither is a world that has somehow been made "whole." Rather than solving the world's problems, the faithful church might appear to make things worse from a human perspective.

Hunter seems frustrated by the degree of alienation between the church

and the world, or at least by the presence of needless alienation between these kingdoms. Certainly, no Christian ought to provoke alienation for its own sake or wear that feeling as a badge of honor, as if it were a guarantee of piety. But Christianity entered the world as a scandal and a stumbling block, and it remains such to this day. Christians have it on good authority that it is hard to take up their cross and follow Jesus and bear his shame. But Hunter argues that thanks to radical pluralism and nihilism it is especially hard today for Christians to bear witness to the faith. "The grammar of Christian faith"—or "God-talk"—"has become more strange and arcane, less natural and more foreign, spoken awkwardly if at all." To the outsider "it has little or no resonance at all."

**THEY HAVE SENT THEIR CHILDREN TO THE RIGHT SCHOOLS AND TO WORLDVIEW BOOT CAMP, BUT THEY HAVE LEFT THEM UNBAPTIZED, UNCATECHIZED, UNACCOUNTABLE, AND UNHABITUATED TO REGULAR PUBLIC WORSHIP.**

Perhaps generic "faith" has become harder to arrive at in modern America—perhaps—but the Christian gospel has never expected to find "resonance" with the world. It did not resonate with the culture of 1st century Rome. Christianity exploded into the world as something hardly "plausible" or "persuasive" to human eyes. Yet pagans converted by the thousands and the Church flourished. Just why contemporary "social conditions ... make faithfulness difficult and faithlessness almost natural" is not obvious, nor is it clear why Christians today should find that challenge more daunting than the 1st-century martyrs did.

Christians who have a higher allegiance to the church than to American society will not take encouragement from Hunter's recommendations for "faithful presence." Social benefits from such a reconfigured orientation to the world may be real, but Christians ought to have their eyes open to the costs involved. A church that trades less effec-

tive techniques for more might lose its integrity, the very essence of what defines it as an institution unlike any other, and the unique message it brings to the world. Anyone who spends much time with young Christians these days knows that a generation has been raised by spiritually nomadic church-hopping parents—or even by radically de-institutionalized "home church" families—who have not bothered to initiate their sons and daughters into the life of the church. They have sent their children to the right schools and to worldview boot camp, but they have left them unbaptized, uncatechized, unaccountable, and unhabituated to regular public worship. This trend is becoming increasingly noticeable even among the offspring of conservative homes. A higher and more

urgent calling than engaging the world might just be engaging the church.

Hunter agrees that the church in America is unhealthy. Indeed, it is the premise of his book. But for him the evidence of good health is a church that "exercises itself in all realms of life, not just a few." Hunter's call to that comprehensive outworking of the gospel offers both diagnosis and prescription for the "post-political," "post-Constantinian" church as it faces an increasingly alien "post-Christian" culture. His book will perhaps redirect the strategy, funding, and vocabulary of transformationalists aspiring to be among the cultural elite, but it will not challenge their most cherished presupposition, that the church's faithfulness ought to be measured by the degree to which it changes the world. ■

*Richard Gamble, professor of history at Hillsdale College, is the author of The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Rise of the Messianic Nation.*

[*Bye Bye, Miss American Empire: Neighborhood Patriots, Backcountry Rebels, and Their Underdog Crusades to Redraw America's Political Map*, Bill Kauffman, Chelsea Green, 336 pages]

## Breaking Up Isn't Hard to Do

By Thomas DePietro

MOST CONSERVATIVES want big government in all its bureaucratic remoteness to be shrunk. But few entertain the obvious solution: reduce the number of citizens and the dimension of the places governed. Ridiculously simple? Hopelessly utopian? Bill Kauffman doesn't think so. And this, his latest work of spirited social criticism, brings to bear all his talents—his historical smarts, his journalistic acumen, his muscular prose—upon his bracing argument for a perennial idea: secession. Let's break up gigantic states, he says, and let some simply leave the Union. It's a notion as old as the country itself and as fresh as the recent champions of the Second Vermont Republic, independent New Englanders who hope to bring government back to human scale.

Kauffman has made an admirable career of celebrating unsung heroes and lost causes. His books include melancholy reflections on the disappearance of small-town life (*Dispatches From the Muckdog Gazette*); a profound study of America's localist writers, artists, and thinkers (*Look Homeward, America*); brilliant accounts of American non-interventionism and antiwar conservatism (*America First!* and *Ain't My America*); and a wonderfully eccentric biography of Luther Martin, the cantankerous anti-Federalist (*Forgotten Founder, Drunken Prophet*). The last makes clear that Kauffman knows his Founders as well as any scholar of the subject.

By his own admission, Kauffman's politics are an unusual amalgam of

views. A self-described "reactionary radical," he elsewhere elaborates: "I am an American rebel, a Main Street bohemian, a rural Christian pacifist," with "strong libertarian and traditional conservative streaks." His decentralist views give rise to his isolationist sympathies and engender a pantheon of heroes ranging from Dorothy Day and Robert Taft to Gore Vidal and Pat Buchanan. In short, I've always thought of him as a party of one. (Or two, since I agree with him on almost everything.)

But Kauffman's latest book convinces me that he's not alone in his "front-porch anarchism," that all over the country movements for smaller, more local government have sprouted and enlisted supporters from across the political spectrum. More often than not, these secessionist groups transcend the tired categories of Right and Left. Yes, Kauffman's a "beyond," as the smug pundits of the *Weekly Standard* once dismissed those who long for a way out of the conventions of current power politics. But if "beyond" ideas promise little in the corridors of Washington, D.C., these simple views provide great hope for democratic renewal in the more familiar corners where you live.

THE FIRST VEHEMENT SECESSIONISTS WERE NOT SOUTHERNERS BENT ON PRESERVING THEIR RIGHT TO OWN HUMAN BEINGS. NO, THE LOUDEST CALLS FOR DISUNION CAME FROM THE NORTHERN ABOLITIONISTS.

History, in Kauffman's deft retelling, often reminds us of things we too easily forget. In this case, he turns to the question that troubled American politicians almost from the start: "Did the states precede and create the United States without forfeiting their own sovereignty, or, by ratification of the Constitution, did the states subordinate themselves for all time to an indissoluble union of which they are constituent but not independent pieces?" The issue engaged the best minds of the day and soon devolved into the nullification debate of the 1830s—could a given state disregard a federal

law, declaring it "null and void?" Kauffman documents the eloquence on both sides, but the real kicker in his account is this little-remarked fact: the first vehement secessionists were not Southerners bent on preserving their right to own human beings. No, the loudest calls for disunion came from the Northern abolitionists, and rightly so. They saw no reason why they should respect the barbarism of slavery. When a slave escaped to their states, they felt no obligation to return him, despite federal laws.

The debate of course turned topsyturvy with the onset of civil war. Southerners fought for their right to secede (and—let's not pretend—to preserve slavery) where just a few years earlier the American Anti-Slavery Society in the North had proclaimed "that secession from the United States Government is the duty of every Abolitionist." Neither prevailed, and Union, which began, in Kauffman's words, as "a strategic imperative" became in Abraham Lincoln's "seraphic design" the gospel of the Republic. So much so that even a sophisticated jurist such as Antonin Scalia has argued that the matter of secession was clearly settled once and for all by the Civil War. Might, as it so often does, made right.

Maybe Justice Scalia is correct. Secession may have been a hot topic before the Civil War, as Kauffman's impressive array of distinguished commentary from the best minds of the time attests. But today, seceding from the United States is surely a pipe dream, entertained only by hippy tree-huggers, gun-toting militiamen, and racist neo-confederates. To be fair, Kauffman does indeed encounter some sketchy characters in his travels among the various groups who champion the decentralist cause. But the majority are nothing like the carica-



tures—they're ordinary people who are fed up with unresponsive government at both the federal and state levels. Sounds a bit Tea Party-ish? In that case, Palinistas shouldn't be surprised that Todd Palin himself once belonged to the Alaskan Independence

Kauffman careens through history, recording the many efforts to break up states that over time have become too big to represent their citizens in any meaningful way. Think of Norman Mailer's unsuccessful run for mayor of New York in 1969—his platform called

grown out of control, with residents living enormous distances from one another.

Kauffman knows he's a dreamer, but he's not the only one. (And there I just imitated Kauffman's own fondness for appropriating pop lyrics.) Though his opening declaration in *Bye Bye, Miss American Empire*—"The American Empire is dead"—may be premature, it's certainly worth hoping with him for its peaceful dissolution, both here and abroad. "Breaking away is impossible," he concedes, but "so was dancing on the Berlin Wall." In this punchy and inspirational book, Kauffman proves himself once again a writer fully in the patriotic grain, an American original. ■

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**EVEN A SOPHISTICATED JURIST SUCH AS ANTONIN SCALIA HAS ARGUED THAT THE MATTER OF SECESSION WAS CLEARLY SETTLED ONCE AND FOR ALL BY THE CIVIL WAR. MIGHT, AS IT SO OFTEN DOES, MADE RIGHT.**

Party, a group that would rather not share its natural resources and splendors with the confiscatory government of the lower 48.

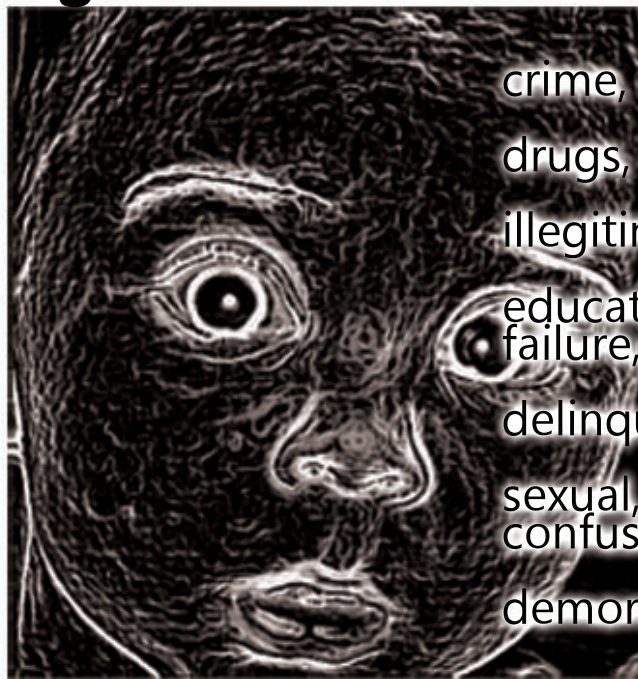
And what about that other non-contiguous state, Hawaii? In Kauffman's view, it's another territory whose acquisition makes sense only in light of the mainland's endless expansionism, the same creed that leads us into perpetual wars abroad. Not surprisingly, Hawaii too has a history of independence movements that begins almost as soon as it became a state. Kauffman chronicles these populist causes with sympathy for their inspiring leaders and a sense of humor for the absurdities inherent in the struggle.

He spends a lot of time with the articulate and engaging secessionists of the Second Vermont Republic, who have held raucous conventions bringing together communitarians, libertarians, and others who simply love their rural lives. There's Frank Bryan, a self-described "Vermont Patriot," with his "defiantly rural populist point of view," and Thomas Naylor, a former econ professor and theorist of the movement who reminds Kauffman that "Lincoln really did a number on us" by convincing most Americans that "secession is illegal, immoral, and unconstitutional." Then there's Kirkpatrick Sale, sometime author of *Human Scale*, the title of which says it all.

If secession remains an ideal, at least secessionist movements are a step in the right and more attainable direction.

for New York City as the 51st state. And others have taken that idea further, with Brooklyn and Staten Island calling for freedom from the city itself. Across the country, Kauffman finds West Kansans trying to split from the eastern part of the state; the rural Upper Peninsula of Michigan hoping to separate from the industrial cities of its south; and Californians admitting that their state has

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[*Life, Keith Richards, Little, Brown and Co., 576 pages*]

## Sex, Drugs, & Rolling Stones

By Daniel J. Flynn

*Slipped my tongue in someone else's pie  
Tasting better every time  
He turned green and tried to make me cry  
Being hungry it ain't no crime.  
—“Coming Down Again”*

IF KEITH RICHARDS'S autobiography *Life* were a novel, the climax would arrive early with the long come down to follow.

Having at the behest of Decca Records ditched pianist Ian Stewart—“the Rolling Stones is his band,” Richards maintains—group founder Brian Jones experienced what he had dished out to Stewart and then some. Once the Rolling Stones transitioned from a cover band to songwriter-driven pop act, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, and company cruelly ridiculed the suddenly dispensable bluesman Jones and ultimately fired him. Whether for truth's sake or as rationalization for famously stealing Anita Pallenberg from Jones, Richards plays up his band mate's fondness for intergender fistfights, constant intoxication, and conscription of girlfriends for orgies.

“It's said that I stole her,” Richards notes of his courtship of Pallenberg. “But my take on it is that I rescued her. Actually, in a way, I rescued him. Both of them. They were both on a very destructive course.” Alas, neither Jones, who turned green at the bottom of his swimming pool in 1969, nor Pallenberg—presumably tasting better every time as Richards's junkie common-law wife—found salvation in the guitarist's mission of mercy. He, too, was on a very destructive course.

If Mick Jagger had a rescue mission in mind when he also bedded the German supermodel after she became Richards's

paramour, he never dared couch the affair in such self-serving terms. Richards wants readers to know that although that betrayal drove a permanent wedge between him and his lead singer, the hard feelings, strangely, came from Jagger. But more than four decades on and less than a few sentences later, Richards maintains that Pallenberg had “no fun with the tiny todger” and boasts about his own adventure with Marianne Faithful. “I was knocking Marianne, man,” he says of Jagger's girlfriend. “While you're missing it, I'm kissing it.”

What once shined or flickered within the Glimmer Twins' friendship has long since been extinguished. Richards labels Mick Jagger as Bill Wyman with a veneer of class, mocking him for keeping ledger-style records of his sexual exploits. The Jagger that emerges here is a control freak whose observation of James Brown putting the reins on free-spirited musicians inspired his dictatorial designs over the Stones. (Just as Axl Rose later found inspiration by watching Jagger.) Richards even claims that Jagger partly enjoyed the guitarist's heroin addiction for the power shift it accomplished within the Stones. Richards doesn't consider that the drug chaos within the band may have prompted Jagger's desire to control the few variables that he could.

Richards confesses that he hasn't been inside his former friend's dressing room in 20 years. He faults the singer for having delusions of success outside the Stones, then projects upon Jagger the sin he exhibits toward him: “Mick doesn't want me to have any friends except him.” The feeling seems mutual.

The poison pen makes the reader love the book, if not its subject. Richards is petty, colorful, cranky, aloof, narcissistic, and salacious—which makes for lively reading. *Life* is undoubtedly Richards's honest perspective, but the haze of drugs, fame, and time undoubtedly obscures much truth. As with the Stones' catalogue for most of the last three decades, Richards could have put anything into his book and the public

would have bought it. But *Life* is more “Sticky Fingers” than “Dirty Work.” Instead of phoning it in, Richards opens old wounds and bruises the egos that make him money. The reader is grateful. But the writer? Surely this is unwise. What does it profit a guitarist to climb the bestseller charts but jeopardize his touring juggernaut?

A law-of-the-jungle vibe permeates the book—as, one suspects, it permeated his band. The folkways of tribe Rolling Stone include suspicion of contacts beyond the village, the pack constantly knocking down the alpha male, and a survival-of-the-fittest callousness that leaves a trail of broken band mates, producers, girlfriends, fans, and children. Much of the book reads as a justification for appalling conduct toward other human beings. That's rock 'n' roll, we are supposed to think, and he is Keith Richards. But consequences hit rock stars, too.

The no-honor-among-thieves ethics perpetually comes back to bite its adherents. The impetus to hire manager Allen Klein stemmed from his philosophy that contracts are not worth the paper they are printed upon; predictably, he stayed true to that vision by separating the Stones from much of their early catalogue. After making much of his working-class, socialist lineage, Richards details how he became a tax exile on the French Riviera once Great Britain's socialist government dared come for its cut. Richards boasts of his prodigious drug intake upon the occasion of legendary busts at his Redlads estate, near an Arkansas truck stop, and in Toronto, only to lash out at the police for setting him up. He simultaneously plays the persecuted martyr and the mischievous outlaw forever getting away with it. Pick one or the other.

He insists the Stones weren't to blame for the peace-and-love decade's violent coda at Altamont. “With a show that size sometimes the body count is four or five people trampled or suffocated,” Richards holds. “Look at the Who, playing a totally legit gig, and eleven people died.” Police, not heretofore welcome

figures in the Keith Richards narrative, were “very thin on the ground.” And murdered concertgoer Robert Meredith was “as nuts as the rest.” The Hells Angels come up for criticism, too, but the wisdom of employing the bikers as security and paying them in booze escapes discussion. “Well, what can you do?”

This attitude wears thin during passages describing the death of Richards’s and Pallenberg’s infant son, Tara. “Never knew the son of a bitch, or barely,” Richards recalls. “I changed his nappy twice, I think.” Willing neither to cancel a concert upon receipt of the sad news nor to inquire into the circumstances of the death with the child’s troubled mother, an aloof Richards confesses, “I don’t know where the little bugger is buried, if he’s buried at all.” Periodic car crashes, weaponry lying about, house fires, and a carousel of unbalanced visitors made Richards’s milieu an unwelcoming one for children. “It was very difficult to be one of the Rolling Stones and take care of your kids at the same time.”

But the circus life overflows with comedy as well as tragedy. There are adventures along the way. Richards unwittingly drives getaway for a robbery. He escapes the clutches of a girl mob (“this savagery of unleashed emotions”). He spots Robert Stigwood on a spiral staircase and lets loose flying knees (“can’t use a boot on a winding staircase”) on the promoter for stiffing his band. He cures himself of Hepatitis C (“I’m a rare case”). He pulls a knife on Billy Preston for playing his organ too loud. He stays up for nine days (“eventually, you hit the deck”).

Amidst stories of drug benders and cold-turkey sobriety, Richards gives a glimpse inside the other recreational pursuit for which he is famous. That iconic Stones guitar sound, Richards reveals, derived from the likes of Don Everly, Ry Cooder, and hillbilly banjoists. Richards removed the bottom string and played his axe as a five-stringed instrument. It was “as if your piano was turned upside down and the black notes were white and the white notes were black.” The new sound, developed in the late

’60s, defined not only songs such as “Brown Sugar” and “Start Me Up” but the band that played them. Ultimately, such discoveries as open-G tuning made rock ‘n’ roll more addictive than heroin. “I could kick smack,” Richards notes. “I couldn’t kick music.”

Richards occasionally plays legend-killer to himself. He didn’t practice the black arts with Anita Pallenberg. He didn’t beat heroin by changing his blood. He never mixed his father’s ashes with a line of coke. He didn’t fall out of a Fijian coconut tree and need brain surgery. Though caught up in his own mythology, the man does try to separate himself from the myth.

The name-dropping is effortless, as even his cronies have become famous thanks to their association with him. He details a mid-’60s romance with the seraphic Ronnie Spector, destined for even worse taste in men. “What do you do when you hear a record like ‘Be My Baby’ and suddenly you are?” His blunt style finds *Playboy* founder Hugh Hefner a “pimp” and Canadian first lady Margaret Trudeau a “groupie.” And even Richards couldn’t save Bobby Keys from Jagger’s wrath after the Texas saxophonist spent a concert in a bathtub of Dom Perignon rather than on stage. That escapade ensured that Keys owed instead of earned money for the tour. Richards’s lackey didn’t make it back into the Stones’ touring band until his patron sneaked him back onstage after a decade-long exile.

Another friend who allegedly provoked Jagger’s jealousy was Gram Parsons, the alt-country godfather whose path crossing with Richards’s was “like a reunion with a long lost brother.” Richards says of his drug-buddy drug-casualty, “He changed the face of country music and he wasn’t around long enough to find out.” Meanwhile Richards trashes the father of rock ‘n’ roll as a cheapskate who cheated musicians out of songwriting credits and toured with inferior, poorly-paid musicians: “Chuck Berry was a big disappointment.” Guitar heroes shouldn’t meet their guitar heroes.

*Life* suggests to us guitar zeroes that we may wish to avoid close encounters with our idols, too. Meeting Keith Richards on “Can’t You Hear Me Knocking” or “Happy” leaves the listener in a mood to venerate. Meeting him in his captivating autobiography is a big disappointment. ■

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*Daniel J. Flynn is the author of A Conservative History of the American Left.*

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*[The German Stranger: Leo Strauss and National Socialism, William H.F. Altman, Lexington Books, 589 pages]*

## Cryptic Fascist?

By Paul Gottfried

WILLIAM ALTMAN’S voluminous study of German Jewish political theorist Leo Strauss (1899-1973) does not break any new ground in trying to link its subject to the far Right. The author’s theme has been amply treated in multiple monographs and in feature articles in the *New Yorker*, *New York Times*, *The New Republic*, *Le Monde*, and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. But Altman’s brief will probably not receive the frenzied attention that has been lavished on such earlier critics of the “right-wing Strauss” as Shadia Drury, Anne Norton, and Nick Xenos. His bulky book may be largely unintelligible to most people who try to get into it.

Although Altman wisely refrains from calling his subject a “Jewish Nazi,” the author finds that Strauss’s interpretations point in an ominously anti-Jewish direction. While other German Jews were fleeing the Nazis, Strauss, we are told, was sojourning in Paris, where he received a Rockefeller grant to do research in 1932. He was not notably alarmed about Hitler’s accession to power because his thinking and that of the Nazi tyrant allegedly overlapped. Indeed, all of Strauss’s work, starting with his doctoral thesis on the German

Protestant critic of rationalism F.H. Jacobi, is thought to provide evidence of his far-right mindset.

In the past, such assaults on Strauss have not gone unchallenged. They have evoked responses from Strauss's well-placed disciples, who typically complain about professional isolation from such places of exile as Harvard, the University of Chicago, and Yale. The most widely read of these defenses is by two of Strauss's former students at the University of Chicago, Michael and Catherine Zuckert. In *The Truth About Leo Strauss*, the Zuckerts devote 300 pages to demonstrating that their mentor's way of reading texts was intellectually serious and that Strauss was never an enemy of American democracy.

Hobbes, Machiavelli, Thucydides, Nietzsche, Locke, and Maimonides, without reaching conclusions that are different from Smith's. Strauss's disciples, almost all of whom have subsequently instructed the neoconservatives, are not misrepresenting their teacher or their teacher's teacher—in the case of those who studied with Allan Bloom, Harvey Mansfield, Thomas Pangle, Michael Zuckert, or other celebrated epigones of Strauss—when they view him as being politically like themselves.

But Altman understands that there are other ways to read Strauss, for example by pointing to isolated statements about the pitfalls of democracy or to his generally favorable assessment in 1932 of a key piece of writing by the

like the German Right, about creating a *Volksgemeinschaft*, or national community. But this appeal to a specifically Jewish ethnic community does not indicate that Strauss supported the German far Right.

It is almost impossible to make sense of Altman when he argues that even if Strauss as a "committed young Zionist ... acknowledge[d] no loyalty to the Reich [the Second Empire] . . . Strauss was nevertheless born and raised in Germany and was unquestionably a German before he made that decision." Here we are speaking not about the accident of birth or the use of a particular language. The question is one of self-identification, and before we can conclude that Strauss welcomed the German far Right as soul mates, one would have to show that he was at least a nationalistic German.

It takes some doing to read into Strauss's call for Jewish solidarity what Altman finds there. Unlike another German Jew, the historian Joachim Schoeps, who did declare for an explicitly German far Right, Strauss repudiated his Germanness before Hitler arrived on the scene. If occasionally he considered Hitler's rise to power in the German context as inevitable, that did not signify support for Nazism or even for more traditional German nationalism. Here Strauss's apologists have demonstrated the obvious.

Among the weirdest interpretations of Strauss's texts intended to prove his fascist, and indeed anti-Semitic, sentiments is one in which Altman stresses Strauss's emphasis on God's act of creation *ex nihilo* as proof of right-wing mischief. Altman agrees with the Jewish socialist Michael Walzer, who places theological and political emphasis on the exodus from Egypt. Both value this account as an archetypal legend of social liberation. By not sharing this predilection, Strauss was supposedly devaluing the Old Testament and expressing at least implicit contempt for the Jewish, as opposed to the Greek, heritage.

Note that ancient pagan scholars and later the excommunicated Jew Spinoza questioned the idea of Creation from

## IF OCCASIONALLY STRAUSS CONSIDERED HITLER'S RISE TO POWER IN THE GERMAN CONTEXT AS INEVITABLE, THAT DID NOT SIGNIFY SUPPORT FOR NAZISM.

According to the Zuckerts, Strauss held the pro-American and pro-English views that were characteristic of German Jewish exiles. Strauss fled from the Nazis in the 1930s and after stays in France and England landed up in the U.S., where he launched a meteoric academic career. A scholar of classical texts who did well in his adopted land, Strauss was always effusively grateful to the American government and to Anglo-American democratic institutions, a sentiment expressed emphatically in his public addresses and in the lecture hall.

As another disciple, Steven Smith, stresses in his book on the master, Strauss held what were essentially Cold War liberal views in American politics. He was friendly to the concept of the democratic welfare state but was also strongly opposed to the Soviet Union and the Communists generally. Strauss took this position not out of fascist sympathies but because he thought the Soviets threatened American democracy and were hostile to the Jewish state of Israel.

It is possible to read Strauss's voluminous works in English and German, ranging over such figures as Plato,

German authoritarian conservative Carl Schmitt. These texts supposedly establish that Strauss was anything but a democrat. Note there is little in this general indictment that has not been tried out before. It is only the tortuousness of Altman's exposition that makes his work stand apart.

Unfortunately, his exposé rests on very shaky foundations. Steve Smith correctly notes that Strauss was attracted to Schmitt's critique of liberalism, as expressed in Schmitt's *Concept of the Political*, because Strauss was reacting against German Jewish assimilationists. When Strauss famously complained that Schmitt had not gone far enough "beyond the horizons of liberalism" as a critic of modernity, he was not registering support for European fascism. Rather he was giving voice to his ardent Zionist commitment.

Zionists were not typically German nationalists. Most of them in the interwar period, Strauss included, intended to leave Europe and settle in Palestine. Altman is correct that the Revisionist wing of the Zionist movement, to which Strauss in Germany belonged, talked,

nothing. But Strauss here was not expressing contempt for Jewish or Christian traditions. He was following medieval and ancient Jewish exegetical practice by treating Creation as the most significant miracle in the Pentateuch. Although the Jewish Left may disagree, Strauss was not being anti-Jewish by failing to embrace its liberation narrative with sufficient fervor. Equally problematic, Altman makes an unsuccessful attempt to treat any statement of religious skepticism by Strauss—and there were many—as evidence that he was deploring the “Judaization of the world.” Why can’t religious skeptics be just that?

Altman’s textual proofs don’t prove what they’re supposed to. Altman makes much of the fact that Strauss devoted an essay, “Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism,” to the German antidemocratic philosopher Heidegger. In that article Strauss characterized this father of existential thought as “the most brilliant thinker” he’d ever encountered. The same essay praises Nietzsche and speaks slightly about the moral vision of democracy, Kantian ethics, and other things that Strauss as a liberal democrat should have admired.

Of course, Strauss was telling the unvarnished truth about Heidegger’s philosophical brilliance. He also notices his subject’s unacknowledged dependence on the Old Testament account of God the Creator for his understanding of the Ground of Being. And though in this essay Strauss examines what may appear to be the seamy side of democratic cultures, these remarks by no means typify Strauss’s expressed opinion about democracy. Why should we assume that his true political view can be found in his interpretation of Heidegger but not in his far more numerous favorable references to liberal democracy?

On May 19, 1933, Strauss wrote a letter from Paris to a longtime correspondent, the intellectual historian Karl Löwith, in which he mocked the “rights of man” and went on to praise Roman-style authoritarianism. In this letter, Strauss undoubtedly disparaged the global democratic doctrines today rep-

resented by his disciples. But this too should be understood contextually. After Hitler’s accession to power, Mussolini was widely regarded as the major adversary to Hitler on the continent. This continued to be the established view, even among Jewish exiles from Hitler (or half-Jewish ones like Löwith), until the late 1930s, when Mussolini threw in his lot with Nazi Germany.

Strauss’s comments about rooting for Roman authoritarians show the mindset of those fleeing from the Nazis, refugees who believed that the democracies were not going to help them. By the time Strauss arrived in England the next year, however, he was singing the praises of Churchill, the would-be German-slayer.

One has to wonder why Straussians provide fulsome endorsements for works that treat Strauss as little better than a running dog of the Third Reich. Last year Zuckert penned a flattering blurb for a denunciation of the “fascist” Strauss produced by two Randians, C. Bradley Thompson and Yaron Brook. After being told for years that Strauss was a nice liberal democrat, his defenders are talking up Strauss’s most slanderous and perhaps least plausible detractors.

Even more baffling, the Straussians as a group have never had the time of day for Strauss’s methodological critics on the Right. They have never condescended to answer Claes Ryn, Barry Shain, Kenneth McIntyre, Grant Havers, and other critics identified with the traditional Right who have questioned their hermeneutic. Such scholars have focused on the erratic or nonexistent treatment of historical contexts among Straussians and assaulted their claims to be able to grasp what Strauss called “secret meanings.” All such critics have argued that these claims to reveal secret intentions are arbitrary and tell more about what the interpreter believes than about the author to whom the intention is ascribed. But Straussians have consistently ignored such critics and in some cases have gone out of their way to thwart them professionally. Why then do they show a warm spot for those who unfairly cast aspersions on their teacher?

Although these questions have relevance for understanding the Straussians as a force in American politics, and particularly in academic politics, they seem less critical for assessing the reaction to Altman’s work. Most Straussians, except for Peter Minowitz and a quasi-Straussian German Evangelical theologian now working at Boston University, Michael Zank, have not paid any attention to Altman. Why bother with diatribes that will not impact public discussion?

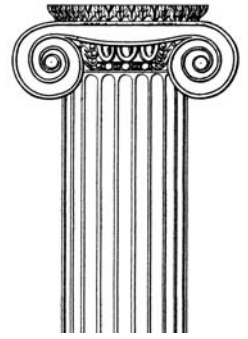
For those who may find his title baffling, one should note that Altman borrowed it from the main figure in Plato’s *Laws*, the Eleatic Stranger. This is a text that Strauss and his disciples have examined in considerable detail. Altman’s “stranger” is not an ancient philosopher from Southern Italy, but a 20th-century outsider, namely Strauss, who presumed to observe the world through suspiciously Teutonic lenses. His quintessential foreignness is supposedly confirmed by the fact that even after years in the U.S. he continued to speak with a “strong German accent.”

The other stranger we are supposed to have in mind is the one found in a movie taking place in a New Hampshire town and dating from 1946. This flick features Edward G. Robinson and is about a Nazi war criminal who has disguised his true identity. Let’s not make our hints too obvious!

Altman does to Strauss what Strauss did to other dead white males, reading esoteric projects into texts that one could reasonably read altogether differently. Observing how Altman engages in this practice, it seems that he has produced a well-deserved parody on the “German stranger.” He ends by listing those figures that he as a self-described Jewish leftist has placed on his personal honor roll. But by this point—on page 528, we have not even reached the selected bibliography—the reader’s interest may have waned. ■

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# Kiss Me, Kate

Here we go again. It is impossible to overestimate quite how much the British like themselves—and impossible to underestimate quite how much the rest of

the world dislikes the British. Having lived in England most of my adult life, I can attest that both viewpoints are 100 percent correct, except, that is, when it comes to English royal weddings.

Almost 30 years ago, the House of Windsor metaphorically tapped its loyal subjects on the shoulder and invited them to welcome Diana Spencer into their collective life. Such a royal wish was easy to obey—Prince Charles's photogenic young fiancée seemed just the sort of new recruit the monarchy needed. So welcome her they did, with an enthusiasm that delighted the royal strategists. The rest of the world, starting with the good old U.S. of A., followed.

Well, we all know how the storybook marriage ended in tears, and how the wicked old mistress Camilla landed her dumbo-eared prince and lived happily ever after. What most people do not know is that Diana's marriage was doomed from the start. Diana skeptics were legion even before the wedding. I speak from the inside, as I was one of her harshest critics until she turned me overnight. Her trouble was her pedigree. Both her parents were suspect—the father a weakling, the mother a bolter. Un-intellectual, headstrong, and willful were Spencer family traits. Worst of all, Diana was born an aristocrat, which meant that she had arrogance galore and not a small amount of snobbery. She also had a very anti-aristocratic quality—she was ambitious.

Once Diana realized that Charles was incredibly spoilt and not about to

change his habits because of a *petite bagatelle* like marriage, she decided to upstage him to such an extent that the royal courtiers, as the strategists are known, panicked and decided to bring her down a peg or two or three. By the time they had finished with her, she was a wreck, the marriage was on the rocks, and the royal family was looking to heaven for divine advice.

THE COMMON MAN LIKES HER, **THE SPOILT STUDENTS WHO STORMED CHARLES AND CAMILLA'S ROLLS HATE HER LESS THAN THEY HATE EVERYONE OF PRIVILEGE,** AND THE ROYAL COURTIER'S HAVE LEARNED THEIR LESSON.

Diana once told me that Prince Philip was the nicest and most down-to-earth of the royals and that Phil the Greek (as he's called by the hacks) had tried his best to rein in Charles and his courtiers. But it was too late. Charles expected to have a carpet for a wife, not a rival for the spotlight, and his father was in no position to order him about; it was he, Charles, who was the future King of England, whereas Philip was just the Queen's consort.

This is why the William-Kate nuptials will be a success. William is not spoilt like his old man, nor of course as intellectually curious as Charles. Which means he does not speak to flowers in his garden, does not write letters to ministers of the Crown voicing his opinions about architecture, and does not travel with an entourage of 60 with a score of Bentleys and Rolls Royces thrown in for

good measure. For the moment, that is. He is a trainee pilot who will have a career in the RAF and one day retire from the service and learn the business of keeping his nose out of politics, unlike his father.

I have never met William but wrestled with him once when some friends of his tried to throw me in a swimming pool during a party at a grand country house in England. I fought desperately because I had some illegal substances in my pocket, and I remember how strong he was until I said that what I had in my coat did not mix well with water. He

laughed out loud and let go. Anyone with that kind of sense of humor cannot be all bad, or a total Windsor.

Kate I have never even seen in the flesh, but I know that she will not be a problem because of her background. Lower middle class, pretty, well brought up, unambitious, and eager to please. What else can one expect from a girl? The common man likes her, the spoilt students who stormed Charles and Camilla's Rolls hate her less than they hate everyone of privilege, and the royal courtiers have learned their lesson: do not try and gain the upper hand and make her their stooge, as in the case of Wills's mother. At least let's hope so. Kate will keep her looks for a while, and her legs are to die for, so let's all together wish them well and hope we don't have another royal soap opera with a tragic ending in our midst. ■

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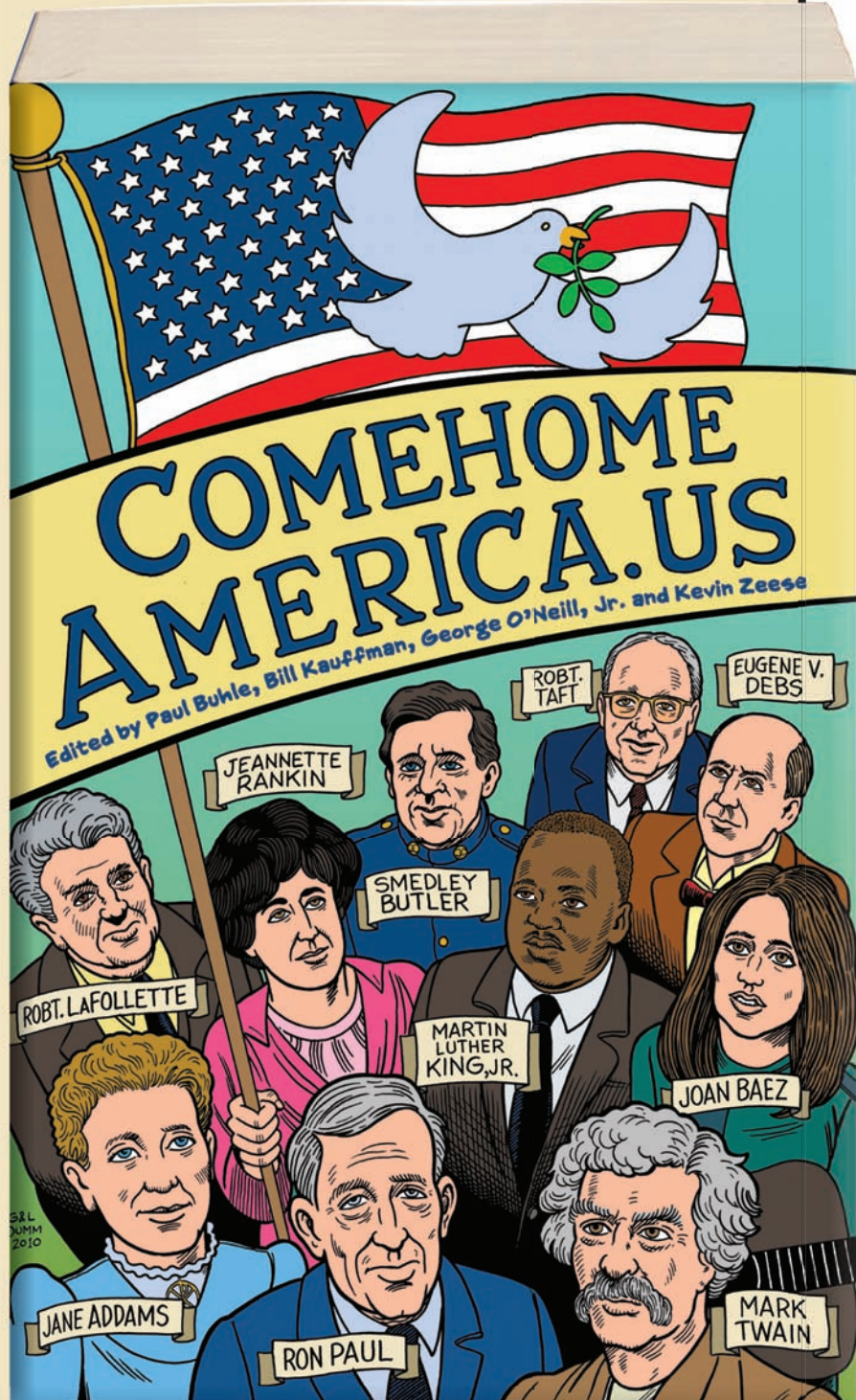
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